



तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

278.5

D 31

THE CHANGING VESTURE .
OF THE FAITH

THE CHANGING VESTURE OF THE FAITH

STUDIES IN THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOP-
MENT OF CHRISTIAN FORMS OF BELIEF,
INSTITUTION AND OBSERVANCE

CAREY LECTURES, 1921

BY

J. ERNEST DAVEY, M.A., B.D.

FORMER FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;
PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND LATELY
OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN THE PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE, BELFAST

LONDON
JAMES CLARKE & CO. LIMITED
13 & 14 FLEET STREET, E.C.4

Printed in Great Britain

To
FOUR FRIENDS, FORMER TEACHERS—

L. A.

J. T. S.

A. E. B.

W. P. P.

—WHO SEVERALLY, IN BYGONE YEARS,
OPENED FOR HIM DOORS
INTO THE UNSEEN WORLD OF REALITY,
THE AUTHOR GRATEFULLY INSCRIBES THIS VOLUME

Preface

THE studies which follow do not pretend to be in any sense exhaustive ; rather they aim at being suggestive, and at deducing and illustrating from history certain theses concerning the beginnings and development of the forms of Christendom. Hence the material has been chosen, not according to its intrinsic worth, but according to its suitability for my purpose, and, if the illustrations selected are not always the best possible, it is at least hoped that they will be found adequate to the end in view. Owing to the fact, again, that these lectures, according to the trust under which they were delivered, were destined for the public at large, I have, in my treatment of the subject, aimed at popular lucidity rather than at technical exactitude. Written in the first instance by a Presbyterian for Presbyterians, the ordinary reader may find a disproportionately large emphasis upon, and a disproportionate amount of space devoted to, the tenets, institutions, standards and observances of Presbyterian history and practice ; yet it is hoped by the writer that the standpoint of the lectures will, on the whole, be found to be, not sectarian, but catholic in its essence and tendency. I have not aimed at special pleading, but, so far as possible, at a candid analysis of the points which fall to be discussed, without prejudice towards or against

PREFACE

any form of Christian belief or practice, *i.e.*, my aim throughout has been primarily scientific and not apologetic.

The studies are meant in the first place for those who belong to the Churches, and aim throughout at challenging thought upon serious matters. The bane of sectarianism is acquiescence, and such acquiescence is too often regarded as the test of true Churchmanship. Thought is indeed dangerous, but its risks are the risks of life as constituted by a wise Providence ; and in days like these, when rebellion against tradition is rife, and unreality the chief obstacle to the work of the Church, thought and criticism are essential to all who would own, exercise, and transmit to others a living faith ; and it is in this belief that the following studies have been put together. Any strictures upon present forms of religious faith or practice which may be found are those of a well-wisher, not of a carking critic.

The lectures were delivered in public at different places in the North of Ireland, but mostly in Belfast, during the winter months of 1921.

J. E. D.

Belfast, *September*, 1923.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE - - - - -	7
I. LIFE AND FORMS IN RELIGION - -	13
II. SELF-ASSURANCE OR SELF-PROTECTION ; THE SEARCH AFTER CERTAINTY. PART I.	43
III. SELF-ASSURANCE OR SELF-PROTECTION ; THE SEARCH AFTER CERTAINTY. PART II.	69
IV. SELF-COMPLETION OR SELF-ENLARGEMENT ; THE QUEST OF IDEALS - - - -	99
V. SELF-EXPRESSION OR SELF-PROJECTION ; THE EMBODIMENT OF EXPERIENCE. PART I.	133
VI. SELF-EXPRESSION OR SELF-PROJECTION ; THE EMBODIMENT OF EXPERIENCE. PART II.	161
VII. SELF-DENIAL OR SELF-MORTIFICATION ; THE INSTINCT FOR SACRIFICE - - -	191
VIII. EXTRANEOUS INFLUENCES IN THE CREA- TION OF CHRISTIAN FORMS - - -	223
CONCLUSION - - - - -	251

Life and Forms in Religion

SYNOPSIS :—I. Human nature the fundamental fact in the study of religion.—II. Life inevitably creates forms; forms react on life.—III. The need of an independent faith; the perils of forms.—IV. Individualism and unity, the two foci of development.—V. The rights of self-expression; the need of criticism.—VI. The relation of forms to temperament illustrated from the history of the Protestant Reformation.—VII. Formalism or formlessness?—VIII. The psychological factors in the making of religious forms; the meaning and place of experience.—IX. Creeds; their past and their future.—X. Resumé; the call to sincerity.

I

Life and Forms in Religion

I

IN a recent volume on the History of Religions, we find outlined between the same covers the history of Judaism, Christianity and Moham-medanism; and in the preface the author, Dr. Moore of Harvard, tells us that it is not the religion of the superstitious and the ignorant, but the religion of intelligent and religious men with which he proposes to deal in the pages that follow, and

“Such men,” he says, “are always in the minority,” (*i.e.*, the intelligent and the religious), “but they are the true representatives of their religion in any age, teachers and examples to their fellows. No religion has ever succeeded in bringing all of its adherents to its standards of right living, or within sight of its intellectual and spiritual ideals; and in the higher religions the gulf between the intellectual and moral leaders, and the superstitious and depraved sediment of society, is widest. But it is not from ignorance and superstition that anything can be learned about a religion; at that end they are all alike.”

So much for the similarity of religions at the lower end, but what of the higher with which the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

book actually deals? As we read the three accounts we cannot help being struck with their formal parallelism. The history of Christianity, in beliefs and institutions and devotional forms, follows substantially the same lines as that of the other two faiths; and this fact, too, though unnoticed in the preface, the book nevertheless *acknowledges elsewhere*. Now this further similarity at the higher end of the scale is a more startling fact; and, the more closely we study the general history of religion in the world, the more we feel that at the higher end also religions are remarkably alike in the lines and the forms of their development. There is a general similarity among many faiths in orthodoxy and its development, a similarity in heresy and schism, a similarity in beliefs, in institutions, and in fixed observances; in a word, in all the things which constitute religion as it is perceptible to our senses.

What then is the meaning of this fact? Is it that Christianity is little or no better than other faiths? I think not. It is rather that the fundamental thing with which we have to do in all religion is human nature. The chief element in the building up of religious forms is psychological, and the similarity of religious forms means nothing more than the similarity of human nature the world over. The treatment of religion, then, from the psychological standpoint is, I think, the truest way of understanding what it means. Christian history, for example, only becomes intelligible when we have learned to

Life and Forms in Religion

understand and appreciate, not only ways of thought and feeling cognate to our own, but also ways of thinking and feeling which appear remote from our experience. If we can penetrate below the forms of a religion to the psychological states and motives which underlie them, we have reached the best view-point for an intelligent understanding of it, whether it be our own religion, or that of another. For what is expressed in the forms is the life of thought and feeling which underlies it but which is in itself invisible.

II

In this course of lectures, therefore, I shall aim at penetrating below forms to the life which created them. I shall aim at elucidating and illustrating from history the psychological bases of Christian forms, *i.e.*, the hopes and fears, the past experience, the future aspirations, and the present motives, some good and some bad, some genuine and some spurious, which have helped to mould those expressions of personal and social life which we call the forms of religion.

My first thesis, then, is, that life, which is itself invisible, expresses itself naturally and inevitably in visible forms. This is true in the physical as well as the spiritual realm. Long ago Spenser taught us that "Soule is forme, and doth the bodie make," and modern scientists have taught us to draw a distinction between life and matter. Life is a power which fashions matter to its own ends. So we find mental or spiritual life fashioning intellectual or religious forms, as

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

its means of self-expression ; and the diversity of forms, which is just as sure a fact as their similarity, is one of the standing proofs of my thesis, for it signifies nothing else than that diversity of life which we all know. The diversities of forms represent diversities of minds, for practically all forms are fashioned by individuals, and their social adoption is a later stage, when the individual expression has approved itself to a larger or smaller social group. Agreement is one of the necessities of organised society, but, on the other hand, difference is one of the surest signs of life, of reality, and of sincerity ; for human nature, fundamentally the same, is yet individually different, and the saying with which Mohammed is credited—that the differences of opinion in his community were signs of the divine grace—is surely true of all religious life. However, if there be an individual soul there is surely also something like an over-soul, both for humanity at large, and for its smaller social aggregations, which we call nations, sects, and the like, into which individuals fall or tend to fall.

Now, if it were true that all Christian life expressed itself sincerely, the truth of the variety of religious experience would be more obvious than it is ; but, unfortunately, we have a great deal of secondary Christian life, which is anything but a help to the Church and to a clear understanding of religion. The forms of the past have become the fetters of the present ; in different communities different forms of experience

Life and Forms in Religion

have been stereotyped as orthodox, and few people, "as yet," seem to have the moral courage to face ultimate facts, and to stand upon their own feet in religious matters. Hence, we have among us belief upon authority as a substitute for individual experience and thought, and we have also the retention of forms of bygone generations, the original meaning of which is largely lost—forms which are not the spontaneous expression of present-day Christian life.

Therefore, we must add a second thesis in this chapter, namely, that forms once created tend, in the first place, to subsist by the *vis inertiae*, in the second, to fetter free expression, and in the third, to produce a type of life which we may class for the most part as secondary, since it is parasitic, and has little power either of resistance or of persuasion. Strength in the day of temptation, and the power to convince and convert, belong only to a life which is largely spontaneous, free, and genuine, in living contact with the realities it professes to know. The stereotyping of forms of belief and experience has probably done more harm in the history of the Church than any other similar fact of religious development. We are called, it is true, as followers of Christ, to be no longer slaves, but sons ; yet in each age the Church has striven, not maliciously, but shortsightedly, to fetter its members with outworn and inappropriate forms for their own good ! Individuals, in spite of the Church, if need be, must find and know God and His truth for themselves ; and every soul which so seeks will have

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

an interpretation of religion and forms of life distinct in measure from those of all other souls.

But, on the other hand, few can live at any considerable distance from the thought-currents of their age or environment; hence each age, and each social unit of the Church too, will have their own distinctive interpretations, and their own distinctive forms, partly resting upon the providence of God and genuinely suited to the needs of the day, but partly also the product of moral weakness and obscurity of vision; for, if religion be the expression of human nature in the realm of the moral and spiritual, it certainly expresses both sides of the human nature, both the worthy and the unworthy. A living religion, *a fortiori* a living Christianity, must ever be sifting out the unworthy and perfecting its theology, its institutions, and all the forms of its life, otherwise it is not progressing but dying. If the forms of an earlier day are too insistent and cramping for the new vision of any age, the Church may, as at the Protestant Reformation, have to ignore their value, and to repudiate them for a time, at least, that it may have freedom to fashion its own. But radicalism is never quite fair to the past, and in every age we find the noblest spirits in the Church seeking to winnow the chaff from the wheat, that its life may be rich with all the treasure of the past and its achievements, as well as rich in the sincerity and spontaneity of present experience. If, however, life creates forms as necessary to itself, forms at least conserve and nourish life, and this is their

Life and Forms in Religion

great abiding value ; but forms cannot create life any more than the picture can create the artist.

III

The genuineness of religious life, by which I mean its spontaneity and power, can easily be gauged by its relation to forms. Forms are necessary to life, but, if the life is ultimately dependent on the forms, it is a spurious life, just as spurious as that of the puppets or marionettes of a ventriloquist. In all communions we find this type of life, a life which is dependent on some external thing, and which collapses if that be removed, as a house without foundations, for the reason that forms, and not experience, have been its source and basis. How often we meet, for example, with a seemingly religious life, dependent on a theory of the Bible, a theory of the Sacraments, a theory of the Church, a theory of Christ's death. Some people to-day assure us that the higher criticism of the Bible is destroying the faith of Christians. No real faith, however, could ever be destroyed by tampering with its forms ; if it be robbed of forms at all, it will fashion anew others for itself. The faith which is found to depend on Book or Church has put these things in place of God, the visible in place of the Invisible on whom alone faith can depend ; and such idolatry is always helpless in the face of reason and progress. Faith may, indeed, be inspired, quickened and nourished by the Bible, by the Church, by a noble character, or a good book ; but it cannot be made to depend on these

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

things and live. Faith which rests upon forms is a delusion, a prejudice ; and individuals with such a faith are at least not in line with the genius of Protestantism. They would be more at home in the traditionalism of the Roman Church, or the literalism of Islam.

The tendency of weaker minds undoubtedly is to yield by acquiescence to prescription, to seek to square their experience with the accepted forms, and to force their lives into the authorised channels ; but the life thus gained has little or no value ; it is that of the parasite and the slave, not that of the free sons and daughters of God. Forms thus tend to subsist by the sanction of antiquity and habit, and to mould the future on the lines of the past ; they give outline, but too often at the expense of freedom and reality ; and against these dangers an intelligent faith must be forearmed, that it may use the inevitable forms wisely, and to good purpose. In other words, forms once created, and subsisting by the real sanction of value or the supposed sanction of age, tend to react on life for good and evil, and tend in particular to mould it according to past usages and opinions rather than present knowledge and experience. This reaction upon life of forms from the past can even produce a counterfeit of life, without reality or power indeed, but bearing still the *external* marks of that living piety of bygone days in the mould of which it has been fashioned. This secondary, unreal, or mimetic life is one of the most serious facts of religious psychology in any age, and the curse

Life and Forms in Religion

of it has bitten deep into the Christianity of the modern Churches.

All life, social and religious, tends to the same development of forms, which forms we may group under three heads—beliefs, or, forms of thought ; institutions, or forms of social development and agreement ; and observances and customs, *i.e.*, forms of conduct and practice. What is true of society at large is true of Christianity ; and it is these three divisions just given with which I shall be concerned in the lectures that follow. Christian forms of belief will include all the Creeds and Confessions of Christendom, and all the doctrinal teaching of individuals which has been accepted by larger or smaller groups of Christians, *i.e.*, dogma and doctrine. Christian institutions will include all forms of Church Government, and certain standards of social agreement or bonds of social unity, such as the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and the like. In a sense, observances are but a sub-section of institutions, for they are forms of worship, *i.e.*, of social self-expression in the sphere of practical religion ; and I shall not seek to draw any hard and fast line between the classes of institutions and observances, treating institutions, however, as relating primarily to the polity, and observances to the means of worship, of the Christian Churches.

IV

Let me now proceed to a more detailed and discursive consideration of the history and value

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

of forms in religious development. Speaking generally, at the basis of every new development stands the individual ; and Christian forms, like all others, are for the most part primarily the work of individuals. But individuals tend to fall into social groups, inasmuch as organised society is a necessity of man, the social animal. Groups, whether formed by agreement or by the circumstance of continuity, as by birth, for example, have some common ground, however small, as the basis of their association. Here we come to the two ultimate units of the Christian ethic, the soul, and society. Ideally, Christianity only admits one society, that of mankind. But the smaller groups of actual fact are, nevertheless, representatives, in some sense, of the *social* idea as distinct from the individual. Hence in every community of Christians, meeting as Church or sect, we have represented both the individual and the social elements of life. The key-note of all life is unity in diversity, and every Church manifests this fact, though in varying degree. Some to-day deplore the Protestant tendency to diversity or sectarianism, which is, at bottom, the tendency to individualism. Others deplore the Catholic tendency to uniformity, which is, at bottom, the social impulse ever seeking to override or limit the individuals which it binds together into communities, though at a cost as yet. The true ideal of unity, will, however, I think, combine both conceptions, and that in their extreme form ; and the Church of the distant future will probably be truly one, the unity being one of spirit,

Life and Forms in Religion

not of outward appearance merely ; and within that Church every man shall be his own sect.

The subdivisions of Protestantism are but the outcome of the great truth of individualism (which in earlier days it called "the priesthood of all believers"), and cannot find their logical outcome along any line except this, that a man shall think freely for himself, have his own experiences, and reach truth by his own road. The real trouble in Protestantism to-day is that the majority will not think for themselves, for one reason or other. But, once a real diversity of life shall have been attained, the social ideal of unity will be found to be reached also ; for the necessary corollaries of a man being free to think for himself are, first, that he shall allow his fellow-man to do the same, and, second, that a ground of general agreement shall be found at last in the things which Christian men have in common, which things, it must be realised, are ever greater and more important than those in which they differ. It is chiefly the refusal of freedom to-day which makes men emphasize their differences to the point of division. The unity of the Church will come quickly enough once men have become independent enough to think for themselves, and humble enough to allow others to do the same ; and it will be a unity, not of intellectual or æsthetic standpoints, but a moral unity of brotherhood, tolerance and sympathy—in short, of love. But we are far indeed from this position to-day, and local groups, in which there is some measure of agreement and mutual understanding, are as

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

near as we have been able to come in relation to that larger unity.

Religion, again, is the cement of society, for society rests on ethical systems, and, for these, religious sanctions are always sought ; thus the social adoption of religious forms is an inevitable element in the upward progress of mankind. Nor will society, as a whole, ever discard a form till it can substitute a better, for society is essentially conservative. Of course, individuals, thinking and feeling for themselves, can never be wholly lost in their social group, and individual forms of religion are always an addendum to social forms ; but it is the latter with which I am really concerned in these lectures.

v

The forms of any age are largely a heritage from the past, but, when we have subtracted these latter from the full total, the residue consists of those forms which the age has fashioned as its own peculiar self-expression. It is so, for example, to-day, not only in religion, but in social life, in art, and so forth. To-day may not be the best of ages in every respect, but it is necessary and right that to-day should express itself in the forms of to-day, and such self-expression has always intrinsic value as a reflex of the life behind it. The music of to-day, for example, has in it all the snobbery, artificiality, ugliness, discord, libertinism and irregularity of the modern world, but it has also its reality, its sincerity, and its hungering for better things, its sense of divine

Life and Forms in Religion

discontent and unresolved strain. In music, as in other spheres of life, the classical period is no doubt greater in permanent value, but the present day must express itself in its own way, or lose its soul. Imitation of 'classical periods is one of the perennial curses of art, for all true art must be spontaneous ; and, as with the music, so with the painting, fiction, philosophy and every other aspect of modern thought and feeling ; and so in particular with the theology, worship and social activities of the Church.

Once accepted, forms often fail to receive the criticism they ought, owing to the conservatism of society which springs out of its desire for safety ; for society has a great dislike of leaving the *terra firma* of the past for the uncertainties of the future, however alluring that future may be. It is to individuals, men of faith and vision, that it falls to criticise and better social forms, and to drag society forward even against its will. But forms which lie uncriticised, like the stagnant waters of a pool, do not retain their pristine appearance for long. Imperceptibly they are overlaid with additions, and even change their contour ; and the general testimony of history is a testimony to the deterioration of forms. The Church of Rome proudly boasts that she is *semper eadem*, yet in no Church have forms undergone a greater transformation, often imperceptible, no doubt, but always in the same direction, viz., a continually greater removal from the simple and healthy to the complex, the ornate and the morbid. The story of the decay of civilisation

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

is the same ; and revolution, invasion and reformation have been the divine expedients for restoring life to a more primitive simplicity and sanity. The tyranny of forms as a dead hand upon developing life has always to be counted upon, and he who would use forms aright must himself be free.

VI

In the history of the Christian Church we have had diversities of race, of climate, of circumstance, of temperament, producing very different forms as the expression of religious experience, in proportion as the life below was different. In Western Christendom the two main types have been identified with Rome and the Reformation, and these two great groups have hardly sought seriously to appreciate one another, as though the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the prime cause of their difference, and must separate them for ever. But the real fact is that the Reformation was implicit long before Luther, *i.e.*, a schism between Northern and Southern Europe. Teutonic Europe accepted Protestantism as a better expression of its own religious consciousness, when once the Teutonic barbarians had been educated out of the child stage, in which they had conquered Europe, to that of the adult ; while Romance and Celtic Europe remained Roman, and did not see its way to change. It was largely national or racial temperament which determined the success and boundaries of the Reformation movement. There

Life and Forms in Religion

were strong Protestant movements in France, Spain, Italy and elsewhere, but they availed not, for these countries were not ultimately akin in religious sympathy to Northern Europe, and they remained in communion with Rome, and—a further test of this theory—France finally became atheist rather than Protestant.

But, if we go behind Christianity entirely to pre-Christian religion, we shall find the cause of the seventeenth-century settlement of Europe after all to lie in something deeper even than Christianity, viz., in local human nature. The differences between the primitive Teutonic and Celtic religions, the one simple, the other ornate, the one largely a religion of thought however primitive, the other of feeling, is precisely the difference between Northern and Southern Europe to-day. It is psychological fact with which we have fundamentally to do here, viz., a difference of temperament, *i.e.*, a difference of that which has produced, and still produces, religious forms; and the new vigour of Rome after the Reformation, evidenced especially in the counter-reformation in all its aspects, and in the great missionary activities in which Rome gave the lead to Protestantism, is a sure sign that in Romanism there were elements of life as genuine as in the opposing faith, elements which must certainly come into any ultimate synthesis of human religion. And again, if the Teutonic nations of the sixteenth century changed their forms, so indeed, for that matter, did the Southern peoples in a measure, though the change in their case was less obvious.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

But neither of the two sets of people broke with its past ; modern Protestantism and modern Catholicism are both natural developments of different elements which were all present explicitly, or in germ, in the former united Church.

Change of form, one must emphasize, does not necessarily imply change of life ; and the traditionalists who insist on a rigid continuity of forms are fundamentally in error. Continuity of life is that which matters. The caterpillar and the moth have little continuity of form, but they have a continuity of life, a life which has fashioned different forms at different stages, and in each case a more suitable form for the stage reached than any which preceded it. Forms of religion are the machinery of religion, and every soul and every group has the right to improve its machinery in spite of the cautions of the traditionalist, and, if necessary, to discard outworn forms of the past for better, as do the creatures of Nature continually without any violation of that coherent system under which they live.

VII

Forms and ritual, to turn to another point, are a necessity of all social self-expression, for they provide the framework of society, and are a standing testimony to the human search for a more or less consistent *modus vivendi*, which has turned social life in large measure already from a chaos into a cosmos. The case against ritualism, so-called, does not consist in a denial of forms but in a readjustment of emphasis. For sanity and

Life and Forms in Religion

vitality emphasis must be laid on the life below the forms, and not on the forms themselves ; and, if on the forms at all, only as they are subservient in the best sense to a life which is at once full and free. The need of forms and the danger of forms are truths equally clearly written on the pages of history, and the anti-formalists give even more startling proof of them than do the formalists ; for in history the repudiation of forms has again and again tended to a formalism of its own, and not seldom of an inferior kind. Here, as so often, extremes have met.

Montanism for example, in the second and third centuries, denounced the formalism and institutionalism of the Catholic Church and promulgated a gospel of freedom ; but within a few years it had developed a hard and fast legalism of its own. The records of Pharisaism give us another form of the same story, and the cases of most Puritan and most anti-ecclesiastical movements are similar ; and in our own day anti-ecclesiastical sects are developing a ministry of their own in no whit radically different from that which they have repudiated. The refusal of certain forms becomes quite as much of a formal thing as their acceptance ; nay, more, formlessness is not only unattainable, it is highly undesirable, if it could be attained ; for, as I have said before, forms conserve and nourish life, even if they cannot create it. The ideal position is that of a formalism which is not a fetter but a help, not a master but a servant, the servant of a free and full religious consciousness developed both individually and socially.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

But forms, important as they are, remain minor things ; life, the reality which underlies them, is the greater concern. It is the realities of life which really matter in the sphere of religion ; not formulæ, but moral values, not the scaffolding, not even the house, but the tenant : and, inasmuch as forms stagnate, while life is ever growing and developing, the value of forms must never blind us to the need of their constant revision, that they may be adequate and helpful so far as possible, and not mere out-of-date hindrances to developing life. Once the necessity of forms is admitted, and also the vital relation which should subsist between present forms and present life, revision will be regarded as an essential of each generation, for it is the only alternative to a tyranny on the one hand which chokes out life, and to a formlessness on the other, which, to exist, must both beget forms of its own, so putting the fool's cap upon itself, and at the same time by its very efforts plunge deeper into the mire of provincialism and sectarianism.

VIII

In the development of historical Christian forms which we shall be studying together, we shall find that forms are largely determined by the appetites, needs and aspirations of the individual or social consciousness ; the desire, for example, to escape from fear, and find a firm footing for life, the desire to complete one's personality by the addition of what is lacking in it, the desire to

Life and Forms in Religion

buttress moral institutions against the destructive reasoning faculties, the desire for a harmony and harmonious development of the personality, the desire to express to others, and even to oneself, in permanent shape, the actual experience of past lessons or deliverances, or of moments upon the mount of mystic fellowship with the Unseen, the desire to indulge the instinctive impulse to propitiate or gain the alliance of higher powers by sacrifice, the desire to feel at home in the world, or contrariwise to escape from it—these, and a host of others like them, are the psychological motives underlying the creation of Christian forms, some representing the lower, and some the higher elements in human nature, but all alike interesting and instructive to minds which are in earnest about the truth of religious life.

In the present introductory lecture I am dealing with religious forms and religious life generally, but in the lectures which follow I shall deal specifically with the life and forms of Christianity as known in history, and I hope to infuse some order into the rather complex mass of motives to which I just alluded, arranging them under a number of heads, each study with a defined sphere and a unity of its own. From these studies I hope it will be evident that the expression of Christian characters and motives which we meet in Christian forms is a very mixed thing, an expression of both the strength and the weakness of human nature ; for, however Christianity has transformed the nature of man, this transformation is only a matter of degree, and even in

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the best types of Christian character many an imperfection is left to reflect itself in the forms to which that life gives birth, or which it takes over, wittingly or unwittingly, from the past. Moreover, in so far as the forms I shall be discussing are those which have received social acceptance in some measure, and inasmuch as the social average is always much lower than the level of its nobler spirits, we shall find a good deal to criticise or condemn in practically every family of Christian forms. It is the whole round of actual human personality which finds expression in religion, and this fact in itself means that formal religion, so studied, will exhibit a good many unsavoury spots as surely as it will possess its holy ground.

To turn to a wholly different topic which has considerable importance for my subject, I would remark that my use of the word "experience" in these lectures does not imply the mere factual experience of past events, but includes many futurist elements, fears, appetites, intuitions and aspirations, which belong often to the potential rather than the actual in human experience. But, inasmuch as these things are so often historically an earnest of their own fulfilment, we may include the actual and the ideal in experience both under the category of the real; for one of the most real aspects of religion is to be found in the systems of ideals, which it has brought to birth, and which every self-conscious life demands. Of this potential or ideal element in experience, the chief note is a feeling of need, and personally I believe it to be a correct intuition which leads

Life and Forms in Religion

men to believe in, and to search for, an answer to their sense of need. Nature, to put it on no higher plane, does not produce a hunger, an appetite, to which there is no response, else evolution stultifies itself. The world is at bottom a coherent system in spite of all its problems, and it is an intuition of the fitness of things which leads men to believe that somewhere are to be found the fulfilments of their needs.

In the doctrine of Atonement, above all, we shall notice how the cogency of a theory and its individual or social acceptance depend upon this realisation of need. When the need which has historically been met by a particular formulation of the doctrine is not felt, or is no longer felt, the theory in question is repudiated, and some other formulated or appropriated, which satisfies the real or felt need of the individual or group. Need is thus one of the chief elements in the growth of beliefs, as it is likewise in the growth of institutions and customs ; but a caution is very necessary at this point.

Needs may be of two kinds, real or artificial, and here we revert to our earlier theses, in more particularised shape, as to the inter-relation of life and forms ; for, if needs can produce theology, theology may also produce needs, but the first are genuine, and the second spurious. I have already spoken of the reactionary influence of forms upon life, and how a secondary type of life may be produced by acquiescence in the authority of traditional forms. In modern psycho-therapy it has been proved beyond doubt that suggestion

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

can produce disease as well as health ; and what is true in medicine is true in theology, in which sphere the chief media of suggestion are the forms of belief. The creative power of imagination is enormous, and must be reckoned with in religion as surely as elsewhere ; but one thing is clear alike in the physical and the mental spheres, viz., that there is a distinction between the genuine and the artificial, between reality and imagination. The paralysis which can be induced by suggestion can also be removed by suggestion, whereas the real paralysis apparently cannot ; and too often in Christian experience, to express the matter bluntly, the words of the preacher seem to have created a need which is not spontaneous but suggested, and suggestion has then, by some appropriate doctrine, and without any great difficulty, removed the need which it had created. Both the feeling of need and its fulfilment are in this case artificial, but genuine religious experience is not of this kind. Yet the same doctrine may, in other cases, have sprung from genuine experience, or have relieved genuine need.

Need in some form is always present in man whether correctly diagnosed or not ; and there are real needs and real answers to them, just as there is real sickness in our midst, along with a good deal of hypochondria. What we need above all to-day is reality, not the quack nostrums of theology past or present, but a vital contact with the healing and quickening grace of God.

Life and Forms in Religion

IX

Reformations have been numerous in the Christian Church, and they have usually brought with them a simplification of forms, especially forms of institutions and worship ; indeed a growing complexity of forms is one of the main facts ever calling loudly for reformation towards a simpler way of life and a simpler system. But, whilst past history presents us with many cases of simplification of institutions and rites, it is strange to note that this simplification, speaking generally, has not, so far, applied much to forms of belief. The history of the past, has, on its intellectual side, been a history of the growth of dogma by continual accretion, and the dogmatic symbols of the Church have, on the whole, tended to grow ever larger and more complex, and to narrow continually the scope of free thought. The process has indeed been the *reductio ad absurdum* of an unchristian principle, as the modern mind feels keenly ; but so long as the intellectual, and not the moral, category ruled the Church, under the influence of speculative philosophy, it was perhaps an inevitable process. The implications of former dogmas were gradually seen and expanded, and these orthodox developments, together with the continual rise of new heresies, calling for ever more detailed definition of orthodox belief and refutation of error, have all tended to give the growth of creeds and confessions in the Church the look of an arithmetical progression, the appearance of a

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

wedge of authority driven deeper and deeper into the domain of human thought. If we compare successively the Baptismal formulæ or creeds of the apostolic age with those of the age of the great Councils, and these again with those of the Reformation and post-Reformation ages, we cannot but be struck by the tendency to an ever greater length and complexity.

The spirit of the new age of to-day, however, is against the process, and I think that we have reached the end of it, at least in the greater Churches, and that the future will see, as a result of the modern reformation of thought which is identified with scientific progress, a simplification of the Christian forms of belief.

A large creed may serve as a bulwark against error, but it can never be accepted whole-heartedly by any considerable section of the Church which has adopted it. The history of the formulation of creeds proves conclusively that even in their inception they represent nothing more than a compromise, a majority report ; and the longer the creed, the more surely is this the case. The variety of religious experience, which implies that individuals have their own distinct stand-points with regard to truth and its statement, prevents the possibility of agreement in detail upon any extensive presentation of the faith they hold in common ; and lengthy creeds only minister to hypocrisy and unreality, as men and women try to square themselves with the authorised views of their symbols, either by pretending to accept, or suggesting to themselves, views

Life and Forms in Religion

which they do not spontaneously hold ; or else, and more frequently, they do violence to the literal meaning of the symbol. Especially is this the case where these lengthy creeds are heir-looms of the more or less distant past, representing their own age perhaps adequately enough, but having few points of contact with modern thought or even modern language. The discrepancy between the present life of our Church and the historical symbols of nearly three hundred years ago, in which it is supposed to be expressed, is so manifest that we see the Church reaping the fruit to-day in a religious system which, to the unprejudiced mind, savours of insincerity.

If religion be really the primary concern of the soul of man, then in it, above all, we need reality and absolute sincerity, just as surely as we need faith, tolerance and love to balance them. Even the unity towards which we are consciously feeling our way to-day we can no longer visualise as a uniformity either of thought, organisation or practice. Our greatest need assuredly is that the Spirit who is both Truth and Love shall have free course in us.

x

I have endeavoured, so far, to make clear a number of points regarding the relation of religious forms to religious life, in order to prepare the way for the more detailed study of the psychological elements in the creation and adoption of Christian forms which will follow. The

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

two main propositions which I have sought to establish are :—

(1) That life creates forms.

Inevitably and naturally a living organism or living society makes for itself physical and mental forms to give external expression to its life, which otherwise would remain comparatively sterile and undeveloped.

(2) That forms react upon life.

Forms give to life habit, consistency, coherence ; they contain, support and nourish it where a due proportion in their use is kept, that is, where forms remain subservient to reality. Where this proportion is lost, and forms accumulate and are prized, not for their value as servants of life, but for themselves or for their past, a tyranny of forms is established which fetters and even suffocates the human spirit. Moreover, as religious forms come to the individual with all the weight of authority, they present to the unthinking mind the semblance of being the essence of religion, its source, its norm, and even its end, and so tend to produce a corresponding semblance of religious life, that is, a thing which exhibits many of the usual evidences of life, but has no root in reality. This type of life is one great weakness of our organised Churches, wherein there flourishes still that formal piety which has never thought or experienced truly for itself. It is a kind of life which does not stand the days of judgment either of God or man, which has no power to help or support other lives, being but propped up itself, and which does not and cannot

Life and Forms in Religion

commend Christianity to any sincere soul. It has not even got the negative virtue of impotence for evil, inasmuch as its association with Christianity is damning the Church all day long in the eyes of honest, brave men, who will dare to think, feel and act for themselves.

It is often argued in this connection, perhaps with partial truth, that an observance of Christian forms is a good thing in itself, as it may lead to appreciation and conversion later ; my own belief is that such formalism has both its advantages and disadvantages ; it is true that its power for suggestion is never wholly eradicated, but on the other hand it blunts the edge of the weapon we are using, *i.e.*, men grow so accustomed to our Gospel, our piety, our ways generally, that these things lose all their power of surprise and fail to arouse real interest. The man who has never heard the Christian message is easier to reclaim than the man who has heard it stated—or misstated—all his life.

This second-hand religion, living fungus-like upon the experience of others, is of no abiding value to oneself, and is a positive hindrance to others. God and the world to-day need men with courage to think sincerely and boldly, even if that thinking means passing into the darkness for a season. Loyalty to truth is a greater service to God by far than loyalty to forms can ever be. The world has judged the Church to-day as unreal ; it is asking for reality, and it is not yet too late for those who know God in Christ and in their own lives to give a sincere answer which shall transform society to-day as in the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

early days of the faith, when insincerity was perhaps the last charge that could have been brought against the Church. If only the moral and spiritual life of Christianity be genuine, it will assuredly find its own natural and adequate expression in fitting social and intellectual forms, but it is for the life of the future, and not the forms of the past, that we must consult here and now.

If only the Church could realise the position in which she stands in relation to the real life of the time, as, for example, many a soldier or citizen realised it in the furnace of the Great War, her future might be a great one, even in this generation. If she does not, and unreality still rules, much of the positive goodness of this generation in thought and impulse will, and must, find its expression outside the fold of the Church, where honest thinking men can feel more at home. In that case, we may even see the development in the near future of a new type of Christianity, as different from orthodox Protestantism as the latter was from the Romanism out of which it was born. That is very much the issue as it lies before us to-day—forms or life? Let us choose life!

Of the lectures which follow, six will be devoted to the psychological foundations of historical Christian forms, the first two dealing with the search after safety or certainty, the third with the quest of ideals, the next two with the embodiment in concrete forms of actual experience, and the last of the six with the formal expression of the instinct for sacrifice; and I hope to follow these with a final lecture upon the historical importance for Christian forms of extra-Christian influences.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection;
the Search after Certainty. Part I

SYNOPSIS:—I. The factor of fear; its importance in the study of religion.—II. Fear and a future life; projection of hopes and wishes.—III. The failure of the search for external infallibility.—IV. The claim of "divine right."—V. Systems of assurance, sacramental and dogmatic.—VI. Baptism and the quest of assurance.—VII. The meaning of persecution.—VIII. The argument from need to belief.

II

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection ; the Search after Certainty. Part I

WE come to-day to the first of the psychological factors in the creation of Christian forms which I propose to discuss. In my title, the word "self-assurance" implies, not self-confidence, but rather self-reassurance, the desire to reassure oneself in the presence of fear, whether of death, danger, pain or discomfort. In this section we shall meet some of the most ignoble elements in religion, as we find how men have so often chosen short cuts to imagined safety, but unavailingly, and how they have sought to shirk a life of faith by grasping at a life of sight and certainty, but still in vain. Not all, however, that belongs to this section is evil in origin and outcome ; we shall find that certain elements which fall to be discussed here belong to the sanity and hope of a healthy mind, and other elements to the good news or Gospel of the Eternal as that has been revealed to the sons of men. But the better elements, for the most part, fall to be considered in a later lecture on self-completion, and the present lecture will be fuller of warnings than of comfort, fuller of the failures of Christianity than of its triumphs, fuller of the fruitless search for

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

spiritual sedatives or anæsthetics than of man's nobler quests after inspiration, truth and spiritual power.

Fear is one of the most primitive emotions of the human mind, an instinct with a real value, especially for the more undeveloped forms of life, but one the intrinsic value and relative importance of which have waned with the growth of other and nobler elements in personality. The desire for self-preservation from which it springs—no doubt a good thing in itself—tends none the less inevitably towards that selfishness which is the place of danger in every nobler form of religious faith, as being along the line of least resistance. From the beginning of human history, the uncertainty and risks of life have been the disturbing elements in all attempts to reach a satisfactory view of the world. Reasoning minds demand some ordered conception of the universe in which they live, that they may feel at home in it to some degree. Nothing but a coherent system can face the ever present fears of the mind ; and, as a system usually depends upon every link in its chain, every point in a religious system tends to be defended with the same vehemence as the system in general. It is this over-emphasis on smaller points as the defences of the more important which has chiefly led to trouble in theological controversy, as 'all lack of proportion in life must do sooner or later. Speculative theology has in the past sprung from many sources—hopes, aspirations, experiences and fears; but actual human religion predominantly from

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

the latter, since even to the present day, for the vast majority of human beings the world over, religion is mainly superstition, and superstition is simply fear which has received a measure of formal treatment.

There is much dispute still as to which is the primitive emotion in the psychology of animal life, but fear has received perhaps as many suffrages as any ; and as we look around us, or into the pages of the past, we see its presence and influence everywhere. Animals have their own transient pleasures and comforts, but they live in perpetual fear, and from that condition human nature originally emerged. Primitive man lives in continual fear, fear of his fellow-men, fear of dangerous animals, fear of the forces of nature, of sickness, and of death, and to these his imagination has added the fear of spirits, who represent the capricious element in life. The belief in malignant spirits is the beginning of a theology based on fear, but only the beginning, for to the natural fears of life man has, in the course of the centuries, made many theological additions, some having reference to the life that now is, but many having reference to the life that is to come, so extending the domain of fear even beyond death.

II

The doctrine of a future life no doubt springs primarily from hopes and intuitions of the soul, and in itself ought to be a source of comfort, but for the majority of men it has meant fear as well as, and perhaps even more than, hope.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

All theological conceptions spring from complexes of motives, and cannot be tied down easily to any one, but the ordinary rank and file of men have been more impressed and influenced by the aspect of fear in religion than by any other. Thus the search for certainty has come to include in its scope the future life as well as the present, under the pressure of two great fears, the fear of death and the fear of a judgment beyond death. The first fear combined with an intuition of the value of personality makes men desire a future life, while the second, springing from the moral consciousness, makes men fear it ; and the second of these fears has sometimes been quite as strong as the former. Lucretius, the philosopher-poet, believed that he had abolished fear by disproving immortality, and there is no doubt that in religion, which in the past has often tended to other-worldliness, the fear of judgment and the desire to insure against its risks have been predominant factors in the creation of popular religious systems.

Fear is the most paralysing of the emotions, and men feel that it is religion's chief duty to free them from this burden. If it does not do it in this life—and for the vast majority it does not, inasmuch as they know not the way of trust in God—then they project all their wishes into a future life, which in the past has been generally conceived of, though with local modifications, as possessing a fixity of place, character and circumstance all unknown to the present life. Men and women, for example, tired of the presence of unconquered

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

sin, have looked with more or less of confidence for a sudden change to sinlessness which has no analogy in experience ; or, weary of the mental or physical battling of life, and of the loss of energy which it entails, they believe they need and shall find rest ; and by the orthodox mind Heaven is often looked on as a place of rest. But magical change and idle rest are not the desires of a healthy and vigorous mind or body ; it is not an externally bestowed sinlessness which is sought in reality, but freedom from the soiled garment of the flesh, and the power to overcome ; it is not rest which is really wanted, but refreshment, or the new life of the morning that follows sleep.

One might multiply almost endlessly illustrations of this projection of human wishes, understood or misunderstood, into the life beyond death ; a little reflection will disclose many such cases to anyone. If I were to choose a motto for my present address it would be the well-known phrase—"The wish is father to the thought." To admit its applicability to religion does not condemn either wish or thought. The modern psychology of wish has destroyed the old Puritan condemnation of human desires, and has shown that the moral question refers only to their discrimination and control. In this section, then, we shall find expressed some wishes of man which are in their setting the refusal of true religion, leading to the degradation of Christian theology and practice, but others, again, which are intuitions of ultimate nature, that is, visions of God, and prophetic of their own fulfilment in experience.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

This aspect of Christianity as a religion of assurance and comfort may be very clearly seen in the abnormal place given in its preaching and practical work to the ministry of comfort. The Church undoubtedly possesses a Gospel of hope and comfort, but the average church-goer knows the minister out of the pulpit as little else than the attendant at sick beds or funerals or at the committees of public charities. The comforting of the sorrowful and bereaved, the keeping in good humour of individuals and parties tending to discord, and, generally, the greasing of the wheels of society, fill so much of the life of the ordinary minister that the true virility of Christianity often tends to be lost in the persons of its official representatives. And, in the case of the ordinary man, the uncertainty of life is a dominating principle of action leading to a persistent search for assurance, or insurance, if you like the word better. The heaping up of wealth, small or great, economic provision against future risks, and other methods of self-assurance represent the physical side of this quest, and the Christian gospel of salvation often figures as the spiritual counterpart; and even the forms in which that Gospel is presented—since supply follows demand—are redolent of commerce and economic transactions.

III

Search for certainty is not, in itself, wrong; but, when sincerely engaged upon, it leads to the conclusion that complete certainty is unattainable,

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

and that Divine Providence has ordained another way—the way of faith. Did men not seek for certainty they would probably never realise the necessity and value of faith ; and there are certain types of certainty of a modified kind which are granted to men, such as the certainties of the moral consciousness, and of moral obligations. But the search for a closed system of certainty and assurance is usually but another name for the refusal of faith.

Infallibility is the word most used in theology in this connection, and the quest of infallibility, which has proceeded without intermission or diminution throughout the centuries in all branches of the Church, is the pursuit of the *ignis fatuus*, the will-o'-the-wisp of theology. It has assumed many forms in its many environments. Protestant scholasticism is the heir of rabbinical Judaism, with its doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures, which reached its zenith for Christian history in the post-Reformation doctrine of the infallibility of the (late) Hebrew vowel points. The formation of a canon of Scripture has affinities to the same question, though authority and infallibility can be very different things, and it was primarily authoritative writings which were sought for. The doctrines of apostolic succession, and oral tradition, and the rule of faith, are other examples of the same thing.

All through Christian history the question has been asked, "Where is certainty to be found ?" and each generation has had its own answer.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Some have said "in a book," others "in a Church," others "in a general Council," others "in the Pope"; and the decree of Papal infallibility of the last century was but the explicit statement of a long popular answer to the age-long question. The Protestant insistence on the sacred Book, which touches us most closely, has been progressively modified under the attacks of modern scholarship. As Luther distinguished different levels of value in the Scriptures, so, from the inerrancy of the Scriptures as a whole, men have passed successively to the infallibility of the New Testament, of a Gospel within the Gospel, of the teaching of Christ, and the like; and, in the modern developments of Protestantism, the teaching and example of Jesus Christ in the Synoptic gospels have taken very much the same place as the theology of Paul and the fourth gospel took in the Reformation age, and, on the whole, with a better right.

To the quest for an external infallibility there is no answer. Men wish to know, to understand, and to walk by sight, but the great truth still stands—"We walk by faith and not by sight." Faith is one of the supreme requirements in true religion, and throughout all the search of man for external infallibility the heavens are as brass; and all the infallibilities which men have laboriously pieced together crumble away at the touch of criticism, that we may learn at long last that the true way is the way of dependence and trust, and that the only infallible guide is the living Spirit of God.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

Authority has its place in life ; as children we learn by believing in the authority of book or teacher, in sickness we trust our medical advisers, and in religion too there is a place for the authority of character and of experience and of learning ; but authority is not infallibility, it is a reasonable trust and involves no abdication of the individual judgment. Moreover, all the experience of the past stands behind authority, and only a fool can utterly repudiate the past. When the day of trial comes the difference between authority and infallibility is clearly seen, for authority is still a help, infallibility a fetter ; authority is reasonable, infallibility always claims to override reason. I need hardly add that, in using the word reason, I refer, not to a petty logic, but to that right and reverent use of all man's God-given faculties of thought which no man may deny without serious injury to himself. Even the most blatant obscurantist who repudiates reason as touching his own position is quite content to use it to the utmost in disproving the positions of others, and quite satisfied that he is right in doing so. It is the sheer inconsistency of the position taken up by the devotee of infallibility which marks it as so unreasonable and absurd.

IV

The search for certainty is also found in the institutional aspect of Christian history, where it usually figures as "divine right." The divine right of Episcopacy, of Presbytery, of Papacy, are

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

phrases well-known to historians, and represent the same search after divine sanction for the organised forms of religion ; and not infrequently the Church has influenced civil society in the same direction. If the early Papal development was on the model of the Roman Empire, the later developments of the Church, when once she had become the chief organisation of the civilised world, had a converse influence on civil forms. The Holy Roman Empire existed by religious sanction, and its head had all the divine right which coronation by the Pope could give him, and all the smaller potentates, by the time of Innocent III at least, held their office by the sufferance of the Roman Bishop.

One of the great forces which effected the Protestant Reformation was nationalism, and inasmuch as the Pope had been the corner-stone or pivot, even on its political side, of the Mediæval system, and that by divine right, the Protestant reformers carried the same idea over into their civil polities. The doctrine of the divine right of the King of England which led to the great Civil War was a direct legacy from the Reformation ; for in England the royal supremacy was felt to be the logical outcome of the repudiation of the Pope. As the Bible had been put in place of the Church, so the King was put in place of the Pope. In the German Reformation the doctrine of divine right appears in the extraordinary position given to the Prince, which was such that he, one man, could determine the religion of his subjects. In the Calvinistic and

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

Scottish Churches the divine right conception appears in the position given to the civil magistrate, whose authority was held to rest upon the sanction of God. Thus the theocratic ideal of the Jewish scribes, which had later been so definitely outlined by Augustine in his *Civitas Dei*, found successive expression in the Mediæval Papacy, the Eastern imperial power and later the Russian czardom, the authority of the German prince, of the English king, and of the civil magistrate of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

All established Churches perpetuate even yet the same conception to some extent ; but modern States ask for less in the way of explicit religious sanction than they used to do. The same idea, however, of divine right still exists in such conceptions as the right of the State over the individual, which appears in a semi-religious form by making of patriotism the chief of the virtues, and in modern so-called democracies it appears further in a doctrine of the divine right of majorities to coerce minorities. But, inasmuch as minorities in history have not infrequently been in the right, it is not right, but might, which is really in question here ; and the same applies to the whole course of Christian history. Heretics were sometimes in error, sometimes in advance of their age ; but both extremes were crushed with the same determination by the majority who represented the general public opinion.

This history of the quest for infallibility in thought and institutions is an interesting one, but not always very pleasant reading. I need not

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

enter further into the subject here than I have done ; I only wish to emphasize the fact that the search for certainty and safety, individual and social, in this life and that which is to come, is one of the most prominent features of history, Christian or non-Christian. The histories of religion and of society alike show that, in the formation of systems of thought or practice, civil or religious, the desire for assurance and safety, and dislike of anarchy, criticism or doubt, are among the determining psychological factors ; and history demonstrates quite as clearly that this psychological factor has been one of the most disturbing and degrading from the ethical and spiritual standpoint ; and at bottom this factor is simply fear, the great paralysing emotion of life where it is indulged. We here have the line of least resistance in human nature, the instinct of self-preservation, and along that line doctrine most easily develops, and also religious practices and institutions.

v

What I have been saying about doctrine in its narrower sense, and as applied to buttress institutions, applies equally to the institutional side of religion proper. The organised Church systems of Christendom are founded on many motives, but the chief among these is the desire for assurance ; like systems of thought, systems of practice exist primarily to save men from fear, and in the past salvation (which means originally safety) itself has usually been conceived as

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

salvation from the terrors of judgment and Hell. In the Roman Catholic Church the system of assurance is symbolical and sensuous, the sacramental system of Baptism, Eucharist, Penance, and so on to Extreme Unction. Like other attempts to gain certainty, it has failed, and Cardinal Bellarmine, the great controversialist, who is nothing if not honest, has expressly stated his own conviction that, when the Church has done its best, one cannot be certain, and must fall back at last upon the unmerited grace of God. In his defence of the Roman Catholic view of justification (*i.e.*, justification as a making just—not a mere declaring just, as in the Protestant definition—so including sanctification as part of justification) in which defence great emphasis is laid on goodness of life, or personal righteousness, he adds, in concluding :

“On account of the uncertainty of one’s own righteousness, and the danger of empty boasting, it is safest to place one’s whole trust in the mercy of God alone, and in His goodness.”

In repudiating the sacramental system of the Church allied with an implicit faith as the way of salvation, Protestantism developed a quasi-intellectual system which emphasized an explicit faith ; but at bottom the system was a Biblical one, eclectic in its use of the Scriptures under the Pauline emphasis which characterised the Reformation, and Protestantism was made to rest on a scheme of salvation, or sum of saving knowledge, which included the federal theology of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

inherited sin and imputed righteousness, and a legal distinction between justification and sanctification, which included also the logical outcome of the federal theology and of the search for assurance in the doctrine of perseverance, and throughout a main emphasis on the historic death of Christ, *i.e.*, upon Christ as Priest and upon certain external facts of the Gospel history. Now the Pauline theology on which Protestantism was based was the theology of a mystic, but Protestantism was not mystical, and it took over the husk without the kernel to a very considerable extent.

The whole elaborate system of Protestant scholasticism aimed at assurance, but the history which ensued proved its failure on the whole in this very point ; assurance was not gained. In the Presbyterian Churches in particular it was often (as among ourselves before '59) regarded as a mark of presumption to claim assurance, and in place of assurance there came into view the awful terror of the will of God, as conceived by the Calvinistic theology, which could ordain to Hell for its own glory the great mass of mankind as readily as it ordained the elect to Heaven. The search for assurance, as for infallibility, like the search for the will-o'-the-wisp, has usually ended in the bog ; and surely we may say to-day that the primary aim of religious life and thought should *not* be assurance and certainty, but goodness, character, the Kingdom of Heaven and social righteousness, and the communion of the soul with God.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

In Protestantism the two Sacraments which were accepted from Mediævalism, on the stated basis of Christ's institution, have had a chequered history of interpretation, as the view of Protestantism has swung, on the whole steadily, from the high-church to the low-church view, with occasional reversions in the opposite direction. The Lord's Supper has not for Protestantism the same essential place in the scheme of salvation as for the "Catholic" churches. Hence the view that it is merely a memorial has not had to contend with any great obstacle in its acceptance. But the corresponding view of Baptism, viz., that it is a dedication ceremony, is not so readily accepted, for here, at least, we are up against the desire for assurance, with reference to the children this time, the desire for assurance that they will ultimately be saved. Many who accept the low-church view of the Supper still believe firmly that, while many will be lost at last, the children of believing parents will not be among these. Of course, if universalism be accepted, the whole question falls to the ground; but, on the ordinary view in our Churches, a great distinction seems to be drawn between the children of believers and other children.

The rite of infant Baptism, concerning the early history of which there is such diversity of opinion, no doubt had behind it in its earlier stages the desire to assure the salvation of the children. From the point of view of the influence of environment there is something to be said for the belief, so long as it remains a probability, and not a

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

dogma. But even in our own Church the tendency to this position of baptismal assurance as dogmatic, on the basis of certain phrases of Paul, is very pronounced. The Westminster Confession of Faith represents a somewhat different explicit view, but one with the same tendency. It practically teaches baptismal regeneration, where it affirms that the efficacy of baptism is not tied to the moment of administration, and that the promised grace is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost. But from a thoroughgoing belief in regeneration it is saved by its doctrine of election—the grace is conferred only “on such as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will in His appointed time.”

Here, then, we have a quest of assurance wherein we may notice elements both of right and of wrong. The influence and training of a Christian home will undoubtedly tend to make Christians of the children, and we can hardly make too much of parental responsibility ; but to imply favouritism in God, or that He cares less for those children who are not blessed with Christian parents, is surely not a thought to be tolerated to-day. Our Westminster Confession of Faith represents an honest and able attempt to systematise Protestant and Biblical doctrines as they were understood in the seventeenth century, but it is not the *ne plus ultra* of Christian theology, and the popular view is still less so. I am here not decrying sacraments, but seeking to analyse motives, good and bad, which have entered into

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

their historical forms and development—of the better elements I shall have more to say later.

. VI

Let us look for a moment, more closely, at this question of Baptism as illuminating our subject. Derived from a Jewish rite of initiation as developed by John the Baptist, whose baptism was apparently both experienced and carried on by Christ and His followers as a sign of preparedness for the Messianic Kingdom, the rite had an extraordinary and varied development, and to the present day no certain history of baptism can be written—too much is still a matter of conjecture or prejudice. In the early Church the idea soon grew up of purification from actual sin—*i.e.*, either original (derived) or personal sin—by the Christian application of the rite and symbol of cleansing ; hence it is not long till we find the desire to postpone baptism in the interests of assurance, that the perfect cleansing of baptism might come as near to the time of death as possible. Constantine, baptised on his death-bed after years of Christian connection, during which unbaptised years he had even presided at the Nicene Council of bishops, is the most familiar case. Post-baptismal lapses into sin were regarded as more dangerous, no doubt on the basis of such a passage as the opening paragraph of Hebrews vi, and in view of the natural feeling that God could not or would not do such a miraculous thing often. But, if these fears respecting death and judgment led to a postpone-

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

ment of baptism (for which a substitute has since been found in extreme unction), other causes led to the wish for its early application, in particular the death of young children, infantile mortality always being high.

As to what is the truth with regard to pædo-baptism, I must say I should not care to give a definite opinion. It is possible the practice was not uniform in evolution ; the desire for infant or early baptism and the desire for postponement pulled in opposite directions, and it is not improbable that the first compromise was found in the baptism of sick children who were in danger of death—again for the sake of assurance. Such a theory would account for the indubitable references to child-baptism in the early Fathers. Moreover, to admit pædo-baptism in the New Testament as some do, does not imply that the practice was uniformly carried on or developed, as other motives entered urging postponement. The obscurity of the whole question may be understood still more clearly by reference to some of the more recent of the competent histories of the early Church. Principal Rainy, of Edinburgh, for example, in his "Ancient Catholic Church," gives a very fair statement of the whole position. Regarding the second and third centuries he says :

"All through this period, and for a good while after, the conspicuous and prevailing type of baptism is that of adults. Nevertheless, *infant baptism was recognised already in the second century* (!) though it is not certain that this statement applies equally to all parts of the Church."

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

and, even of the *fifth* century, he says (p. 447) :
“ Children even of Christian parents were not always or necessarily brought to baptism at this time.”

Such is the considered verdict of a prominent Presbyterian teacher and church leader of these later days, who cannot be charged with any predisposition towards radical views. And Lagarde, in his recent and able volume on “ The Latin Church of the Middle Ages,” definitely states that infant baptism, except for those in danger of death, began in the sixth century (p. 37). Whether it commenced then, or recommenced, may be disputed, but at least my thesis stands, viz.—that the desire for assurance led to (1) The frequent postponement of baptism ; (2) the baptism of children, especially of the sick or dying ; and the theory of the sacraments as it grew up tended to emphasize this motive.

The Augustinian view of baptism emphasizes its objective efficacy, and this idea, even before the days of Augustine, is the background alike of its postponement and of its early administration—it mattered greatly for assurance that the rite should be performed early or long delayed in the varying cases of sick children or healthy adults. In the end the pædo-baptist view won the day in the seventh and eighth centuries, but not until the Church had provided a sacramental system to take the place of baptism for the adult, in particular the sacraments of penance and (later) extreme unction, in which the purificatory work of baptism was continued in new forms available

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

for post-baptismal sins, which otherwise threatened complete disaster.

It is only necessary to point out that Protestantism could not, or dared not, completely break with this motive of assurance and its forms, though it modified them ; but the Protestant doctrine of assurance rested not on baptism and other sacraments for young and old, but upon faith in the case of the adult (that is, appropriation of a plan of salvation) and upon the doctrine of election for children. The children of the elect or faithful are elect, and to them baptism conveys a real sacramental grace, as already pointed out. In Calvinistic Protestantism it is the doctrine of election, in particular the election of the "holy" children of believers, which bears the weight of the desire for assurance in this connection. But throughout we have the motive of such theology in the desire to obtain a coherent system of assurance for oneself and one's dear ones, and, failing such a system, fear tends to wax strong.

Here, then, once more, we have cases of a wrong-headed pursuit—to find assurance somewhere else than in God ; the Roman Catholic finds it in the Church with its sacraments and authority, the Protestant in the family with its environment of Christian life and thought ; both have seen the value of environment, but both fail to lay the emphasis upon the one sure ground of assurance, viz., the character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

VII

Corresponding to the individual search for assurance, there is a social search for assurance. There is one great institution of society, if one might call it so, in which civil and religious elements have met to form an alliance in a combined search for social and religious assurance. I refer to persecution. Persecution is usually the outcome of fear—fear for the safety of the soul, or for the constitution of society. Both fears are usually found together, for reformers seem to threaten both types of assurance by their shaking of society out of its wonted grooves ; and society and religion, body and soul, join forces against the breath of doubt or revolution. Mere religious fear of itself can rarely produce sustained persecution ; it was not till Sadducees joined hands with Pharisees that the death of Christ or the death of Stephen could be compassed. But inasmuch as society rests on religious sanctions (for all social morality or praxis does rest in some sense on what we must call religion) it is generally possible for religious fears to awaken social fears of disorder and anarchy ; and the history of religious reformation is a history both of persecution by the civil power and of social revolution, so closely are the two elements bound together for good or evil. Tolerance is a rare virtue in individuals, and seldom, if ever, found in society, except as a synonym for indifference. The most famous example of persecution as an institution is the Holy Office of the Inquisition, but the history of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Protestantism has many a stain of the same kind upon it in respect of days when men cared greatly for faith.

Society always reacts against extremes, whether of good or evil, *i.e.*, against anything which flagrantly challenges the average of public opinion and practice ; and it does so under the impulse of self-preservation with the belief that the maintenance of the *status quo* is of primary importance for life. In modern States, however, religious persecution is rare. The development of freedom has to-day reached the inconsistent position that men may think what they like so long as they do not carry into effect their revolutionary thoughts. Mormonism has been interfered with by the State, not for its ideas, but for its practices, and the fate of pacifists or Bolsheviks has often been the same. The modern State is, in fact, indifferent to religion, where that is individualistic in its aspect ; but, where its social implications affect the State, and the status of the social virtues, such as patriotism, upon which the State feels itself to rest, there is just the same intolerance and the same tendency to persecute as ever. And the greater the supposed danger of the State, the fiercer will be its reaction against disintegrating thoughts, the classical example here being the Decian and Diocletianic persecutions of the third and fourth centuries. Here, then, we have another instance of the desire of assurance for body and soul affecting the forms of human life, both civil and religious.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—I

VIII

In what I have said I am not undervaluing what is of good in the forms I have alluded to, whether sacraments, or standards of the Church, or types of organisation. When I say the wish is father to the thought I must again repeat that it does not follow that either wish or thought is wrong, or that the forms I have mentioned are *wholly* accounted for by the desire for assurance. But the desire in question undoubtedly does create a predisposition towards certain forms and an antagonism to others, quite independently of the sources or intrinsic validity of the forms. In all the forms in question there are good elements as well as bad, for the intelligent mind at least ; but for the ordinary popular view which does not understand, or seek to understand, the ethical basis of its forms, the unworthy element tends to predominate, especially in the forms which help to relieve the primitive emotion of fear. For the many such forms have a superstitious value, and owe their efficacy more to their seeming power for mental suggestion than to their intrinsic truth.

And, speaking generally, the reasoning which underlies most of the forms involved in the search for certainty is as follows :

“This conception is necessary to our system:
therefore it is true.”

Beneath this argument lie two premises which are worthy of attention, viz., that what is necessary is true, and that the system in question is true.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

With the former I have no real quarrel ; to deny it is, as Lotze says of atheism—" not illogical but absurd " ; but the second cannot pass unchallenged. All systems of human thought are a blend of truth and error in varying degrees, and so the argument breaks down in this point. Yet such actually is the explicit or implicit argument of the majority of religious systems. The desire for consistency which it shows is praiseworthy in a sense, but the dogmatism of the position is its weak point. Every system which has been sincerely held by men has undoubtedly its relation to truth ; but to equate one's system with the truth is one of the chief errors of past theologies.

The argument above is found in Christian theology, especially in connection with the doctrines of the person and work of Christ, and it may be stated in relation to experience in some such form as this :

" I need this conception, therefore I believe it."

I hope to speak later about the genuine truth of such an argument from the necessary to the true, resting as it does upon an ultimate perception or intuition of the fitness of things. But one must always enquire concerning the need in question whether it be a genuine and spontaneous thing, or induced by suggestion, authority, or example, *i.e.*, artificial ; and to a definite consideration of this point I hope to turn in the lecture which follows.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection;
the Search after Certainty. Part II

SYNOPSIS :—I. The Christian doctrine of salvation in history.—II. Theories of the work of Christ.—III. Justification and imputation in Protestant theology ; the parallelism of the Mass.—IV. Experience and the Atonement.—V. The Calvinistic bid for assurance.—VI. Resumé ; variations of soteriology.—VII. The idealisation of the Passion story.—VIII. The refusal of faith ; the need of venture.—IX. The place of assurance in Christian experience and teaching.—X. The instinct for faith ; gambling, heroism, and the call of God.

III

Self-Assurance' or Self-Protection ; the Search after Certainty. Part II

IN the last lecture, which was concerned with the subject of the moulding influence upon Christian forms of the desire for self-reassurance, I dealt with the place of fear in religious psychology ; with the various external infallibilities which men have created to give them certainty ; with the varying forms of divine right, which show us the same quest in another form ; with the schemes of salvation in different Christian communions, and in this connection with the sacraments, and particularly the sacrament of baptism, as influenced by this search for assurance. I then spoke of the social search for assurance evidenced in the practice or institution of persecution, and I closed by raising the questions as to how far the quest for assurance was justified, how far the needs so met were genuine, and how far the answers given had positive value. I hope to discuss these points among others in the present lecture.

I

The chief point of importance in this connection is the Christian doctrine of salvation. The moral consciousness of man is aware of ideals, and can find no permanent satisfaction in a life, such as the present, which falls short of them.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Theological attempts at assurance have usually been made on the basis of external acts or "works," but the more spiritually minded man has always felt that assurance could not be so gained. Protestantism, following Paul, sought to found assurance on faith, but failed in its objective, mainly for two reasons: faith was too closely identified with dogmatic belief, and the Calvinistic picture of the character of God which underlay the theological system was too arbitrary to beget definite assurance. If, however, faith be kept nearer to its original meaning in the words of Christ, *i.e.*, trust in God, a real measure of assurance may be gained, if we hold to the fundamental Christian conception of the character of God as Love or Father. The only sure basis of assurance in life or death is not to be found in ourselves, but in God and His free love for the sons of men.

If we turn now to the doctrine of the Person of Christ, we shall find the importance of this psychological factor of the search for assurance clearly represented. The development of creeds on this point is best understood if we remember that, throughout, the intention of the Church is to prove Christ's competence as the Saviour of man. As the idea of salvation varied, so did the idea of the Saviour, and of the manner or form of His competence. For example, in Greek theology the deification of man demanded the deity of Christ, the healing of man demanded His humanity. Athanasius tells us that God became man that man might become God (in some real

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

sense): *cf.* II Peter, i. 4, "That ye may become partakers of the Divine nature"; and Gregory of Nazianzen asserts that "What is not assumed is not cured" (*viz.*, human nature).

In the Mediæval period the psychological position is the same, though theology has changed. The chief point of Christ's humanity is no longer that men may come into organic and salutary union with Him, but that He may do as man what other men have failed to do. The chief point in His divinity is no longer that men may be made partakers of the divine nature, but that His sacrifice, being that of an infinite being, may have infinite value. But it is still the competence of Christ for His work which is the regulating conception in Christology.

Greek theology operated chiefly with a doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, Latin theology, which developed later, with a doctrine of the death of Christ, as the respective cores of their systems. The Latin development, which is summarily expressed in the Mass, or in the Protestant doctrine of justification, gradually lost its sense of the historic Jesus under the influence of the idea that what mattered was, not what Christ was, but what Christ did; and the earlier Greek conception, to which there is a widespread return to-day, was, after all, the more adequate one. It was nearer to history, had a larger place for the moral, as summed up in the character of Christ, and stood for the truth that what one does is an expression of what one is. By their emphasis on external facts and their acceptance by the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

individual, the Roman Catholic and Protestant scholasticisms both evolved theories of salvation which, if consistent, were ethically untenable, and the Church to-day is feeling more and more that Christianity rests upon what Christ was and is, rather than upon what He did and does, though both sides still have place in our thought.

II

Thus a history of the doctrine of the Person of Christ illustrates clearly my thesis that what is sought is usually a system of assurance (or of a competent salvation) which is consistent. The doctrine of "the work of Christ" illustrates the same thing. For the first thousand years we have little development on this point, from which we may infer rightly that it was not one of the great issues in early Christianity, though every age of the Church must have had some doctrine of *salvation*. The development from Anselm mattered more for Protestantism than for Roman Catholicism ; for Protestantism, by repudiating the idea of salvation through the sacramental system, was driven to stress almost exclusively the great Western conception of the priestly work of Christ. And the desire for assurance in Protestantism has led to very strange results in its doctrine of Calvary and its doctrine of justification, results which would be almost incredible if we could not explain them by these desires for assurance and for competence in the idea of Christ's priesthood.

Whatever the Protestantism of to-day is, or

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

may become, the Protestantism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was little more than a purified Mediævalism. The doctrine of merit underlay the Mediæval system; in Protestantism it was repudiated as regards Mary and the Saints and the individual Christian, but retained as regards Christ. The category of imputation is only another form of the merit category, according to which the salvation brought to men in Christ was construed. The Anselmic conception had been commercial, and the commercial element abides in early Protestantism, though a more forensic and less ethical turn is given to the doctrine. For example, salvation is usually connected with the historic fact of Christ's death rather than with the Divine-human character which it reveals, and we get such extreme statements as the notorious reply of an orthodox Protestant to a supposed legalist: "Your religion is all doing, mine is all done." In its relation to forgiveness of sin, this view is usually expressed in such terms as the following: "My sins, past, present, and to come, were laid upon Christ." This, baldly stated, means that, even of my future sins, the guilt and punishment alike were expiated and borne by Christ on Calvary. The Apostle Paul was greatly troubled about the ethical deductions from such a theory, and, whatever its values in the past or present, no one at any rate could accuse it of a primary regard for Christian morality.

Two solutions at least have been found in history of the ethical problem here presented.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

The Roman Catholic solution is the doctrine of the Mass, where we have a continual repetition or re-presentation of the sacrifice of God as the divine counterpart to the sin of man. Protestantism has recently found a solution of its own in a doctrine of "Eternal Atonement" which makes the Cross but the revelation in time of eternal principles according to which God deals with human sin. After all the Mass means much the same thing, and to it I shall recur in a later lecture. But, at least, it is true that the common interpretations of the Atonement, though they have a genuine basis in experience, too little understood, are open to serious moral criticism where they have preferred assurance to ethical content. In all these points which I am now discussing the aim of man has been to gain, almost by any means, a coherent system of assurance, *i.e.*, of "safety, certainty and enjoyment," failing which fear continues to dominate his life, and to threaten his future.

III

Take again the doctrine of justification by faith in Protestant theology. What does it ultimately mean but a doctrine of assurance? For Roman Catholic theology justification means a making just, and so refers to character or goodness actually gained, *i.e.*, justification and sanctification are two names for the same thing—making righteous, making holy. In the Protestant use of the word the Pauline conception is followed, *i.e.*, a declaring just, or acquittal in

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

the sight of the Great Judge, by reason, not of gained, but of imputed righteousness. If justification, then, be taken as acquittal, it is a synonym for forgiveness, and forgiveness is but another name for restored communion with God—the doing away with the sense and fact of alienation. Now such communion is a progressive thing, depending on the growing hatred of sin and love of the good ; the sense of communion deepens with the growth of character. Of course, the first step has an exceptional importance, but it is only in theory that justification can be treated as an act ; such a theory has indeed a great suggestive value for the giving of assurance, but at bottom the conflict in question over the definition of words is an unreal one, for our assurance depends quite as much on our continuance in goodness as on our once being converted—at least on its subjective side it is so—for the basis of assurance, apart from the nature of God, is in our knowledge that we *are* His (not merely that we *have been* His).

Protestant theories of salvation, too often narrowed to justification in the Pauline sense, have in history laid an inordinate emphasis upon assurance, and upon a single act of God and man ; but at bottom there lies the knowledge that assurance and peace are according to the mind of God, and that the immutability of God is a guarantee that what was begun shall continue ; while on man's side the truth of perseverance rests ultimately upon the truth of Gnosticism that in some real sense knowledge is virtue,

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

that true knowledge is morally conditioned, and, once gained, such clarity of vision or understanding is an impregnable fortress for the soul—to ignore it would argue not sin but insanity.

The Roman Catholic emphasis upon the moral aspect of justification (as distinct from the forensic) has, on the other side, too often led to an emphasis upon good works rather than upon their springs in the heart ; but one must deplore the controversy as largely a matter of differing definitions. Protestantism was wrong in attaching a greater weight to assurance than to character, and it has reaped the bitter fruit of that sowing in a hundred ways of late ; but it was psychologically right in its perception that peace, or harmony of mind and personality, was the truest condition of personal goodness ; the paralysis of mind and spirit must be overcome before we can co-operate with God in any true sense.

Perhaps the weakest spot in the Protestant theory was the specific doctrine of imputation which underlay its theory of justification. The theory in question rested on the assumption that God cannot forgive by grace upon change of heart, he must have some quantitative satisfaction for sin, and this was found in the positive righteousness of Christ and in a definite transference of man's guilt from his own shoulders to other shoulders, *i.e.*, Christ's, which could 'bear it and bear it away. The Mediæval category of merit was retained and extended in this connection, and an elaborate theory of cross-imputation developed, mainly on the basis of the mystic theology of

Self - Assurance or Self - Protection—II

Paul, taken, not as mystic, but as rationalistic, *i.e.*, imputation to Christ of our guilt, and to us of His righteousness.

Now a most extraordinary parallelism is to be found here between Roman Catholic and Protestant theory, at the cores of the respective systems. The focus of any Christian system is, and must be, its doctrine of salvation. In Roman Catholicism this was centred in the sacraments, and chief of these was the Mass. The Mass is the very heart of Roman Catholicism, and it really is nothing else than the Roman Catholic doctrine of Atonement. In the Mass are set in opposition the sin of man and the suffering of God ; the repentance of man sealed in confession before coming to the Sacrament, and the sacrifice of God which does away with sin. All that Protestants find in the Atonement is thus found in the Mass ; and the formal pivot of the theory in history is the doctrine of Transubstantiation according to which the elements become upon the altar the true sacrificial body and blood of God. The objective reality of the sacrifice (offered continually, as man sins continually, and so continually wounds God—*i.e.*, the sin of man and the suffering of God go together in the present as surely as in the past) as offered in the Roman Catholic Church, depends upon an unreal piece of metaphysical abstraction, by means of which the substance of Christ's body and blood is found on the altar without its sensible attributes, while the attributes of bread and wine are found without their substance.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Now it has been contended, and with reason, by the antagonists of Rome, that such interchanges of substance and attributes are inconceivable ; and that only in a theory which is a piece of special pleading could the distinction be made or even imagined : the important thing, however, to notice is that, in the interests of a theory of salvation, we have here an extraordinary piece of mental juggling, which makes attributes or sensible manifestations exist apart from the underlying substance, nay more, exist along with a substance which has completely different sensible manifestations. I think we may conclude that only the desire to believe it true has made it possible to conceive.

But Protestantism has unwittingly done exactly the same thing. The centre of its orthodox system is a doctrine of atonement resting upon a theory of imputation which is only another form of transubstantiation. Guilt and righteousness are relative terms, which refer to the personal will, and cannot be dissociated from it by any mental jugglery. Guilt is our obligation to have done otherwise than we did, righteousness is our voluntary acceptance of, and abiding in, the will of God. These words simply represent states of the consciousness, and are in no sense transferable. The effects of sin may, or might, be cancelled, but a man's guilt is merely a fact of the past which is as certain and inalienable as his birth ; and, again, no righteousness is of any real moral value which is not personal, appropriated and voluntary.

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

Yet Protestant theory has asserted that Christ can take our sin, and we can take His righteousness, in such a way that the substance of His good will can co-exist with the accidents of our guilt imputed to Him, and the substance of our evil nature co-exist with the accidents of His obedience and righteousness. Apart from the impossibility of thus dividing between substance and accidents, it is important to remember that it is the substance here which matters, and not the accidents. It is my nature, not my guilt for past sins, which most needs attention, not my *sins*, but my *sin*, for sins are but expressions of sin. All good is from God, and in that sense our righteousness must be His, but man's guilt cannot become God's. God may forgive our sin against Himself, *i.e.*, the suffering we have caused Him, He may overrule the effects of our sins for good, but He cannot take from our personalities the fact of our having done them, in which consists our guilt; this guilt He may overlook, but He cannot change it. Our sins may be made of no account for present and future, but they cannot be removed from the past as historical events, though I believe that some day they may cease to exist even for our memories. But if we think of *sin*, and not *sins*, we shall see that what matters is not what we have done, said, or thought; but the will which did these things; if that be regenerated, sin (not sins) may disappear as a fact of consciousness, because it has no further present existence as a state, but it disappears, not by imputation of our past to Christ, and

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

His present to us, but by the simple process of change, *μεταβολή*.

In this criticism I am quite aware that every point adversely criticised can be found to have some real value if rightly appreciated. God does actually take responsibility for all things past, present, and to come, but imputation is not only an unsuitable word in virtue of its commercial derivation, but it stands for an absurd theory of what actually happens in experience; and it is an almost exact parallel to the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, each of these two branches of Christendom positing the same irrationality at the very centre of its system of salvation. It is surely, then, not for us to sneer at others, till at least our own house has been set in order.

IV

I have here attempted to show how unreal are the theories which the desire for assurance, by seeking a closed intellectual system, can produce in the central points of any such system by which this assurance of salvation is regarded as mediated. But remember, need not only produces desire, but, according to the evidence, it has often actually found the answer to that desire in experience; and experience, not mere desire, lies at the back of all such theories, however intellectually inadequate and misleading.

The great Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians, like St. Paul and Augustine before them, had found peace and pardon before they

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

began to preach them and incorporate them in their systems. Their experience was genuine, however inadequate the attempted expression of it, and it was surely better to hand on their own good news to others by inadequate phraseology, than to keep it to themselves till a satisfactory statement could be found, which should at last pass the critic's censorship—if men waited so they might wait for ever, since we have no guarantee that satisfaction will ever be found in combining experience and theory in this life. Life is infinite in many ways, and thought seeks to define or finite, and it is probable that they are to some extent for ever incommensurable things, until infinity itself shall be ours. The progress of theology is by need seeking, not understanding, but satisfaction, and, having found it, seeking further to express the way of satisfaction or salvation to others ; and after all the sure test of practical truth is the pragmatic—Does it work ? A little knowledge of Church History will assure us that we are dealing in Christian doctrine, not with speculation and unpractical theories, but with the actual and concrete experience of men seeking a continually more adequate expression of the great truths which have been tested and proved again and again. It is not thought but life which is the driving power in Christian theology.

In connection with the doctrines of Atonement, again, we can see the desire for assurance equally behind the Roman Catholic assertion of the repetition of Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, and

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

behind the Protestant denial that it is, or could be, repeated ; in the one case the sacrament is a present offering for recent sin, in the other the death is a perfect sacrifice for every sin, offered once and for all. In both cases, moreover, the quantitative categories of merit and commercial imputation have had their chief value in the definite form of assurance which is given by a mathematical equation ; there is no vagueness or loophole for doubt, unless one doubts the whole system.

It is a very remarkable instance of the failure of a theology which aimed primarily at assurance that Protestant Soteriology often failed to produce the assurance of salvation sought. In the Highlands of Scotland, in particular, the Calvinistic idea of the arbitrary will of God, issuing in election or reprobation according to no principle except a desire to manifest His glory and power and so-called justice impartially in salvation or retribution, destroyed all sense of assurance ; and to claim assurance was regarded as irreligious, and probably dangerous as "a strong delusion."

Yet the Calvinistic system in question is the supreme attempt in history to give men a closed system which should safeguard and guarantee the salvation of the elect, and minister to their unfaltering assurance. This it seemed to do in the first age, and this it can still do in a measure, if rested on mysticism, and not on logic. But

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

its doctrine of the character of God was its weakest point, and that doctrine had been developed in the mediæval schoolmen as the setting for, and explanation of, the substitutionary theory of Atonement. Whether salvation, then, were rested on works or faith, it was equally impossible to be sure of either works or faith if the choice of the elect was an arbitrary matter with God ; fortunately for most post-Reformation Christians the matter was solved by a form of baptismal regeneration according to which the children of the faithful were themselves elect—again a rigid doctrine aiming at assurance. If God could not be counted on by those outside the covenant, He was at least bound by His own covenant with those inside its pale. But it is surely a great pity to find men thinking that their only safety lay in holding God to His word rather than in a Nature which is benevolence towards all men !

VI

To sum up—the Soteriology of the early Church, as mentioned before, was found, not in a doctrine of atonement, but in a doctrine of Christ's Person. The reason why no definite development of the Atonement conception took place till late is that men sought and found all they needed in an interpretation of Christ's personality rather than of His "work" so called. As Principal Franks points out, the real theological interest behind the Nicene and Chalcedonian formulæ was the desire for a

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

competent Saviour, One who should be by nature perfectly able and fitted to be and do all that Christian need and theology demanded of Him. Even for Anselm, with whom the interpretation of Christ's death takes on its more modern importance, the Person of Christ is still central. His great treatise has a title which reveals this—" *Cur deus homo?* " (Why did God become man? not, Why did Christ die?); and all is there rested on the constitution of a God-man who outweighs all things in value, and therefore is competent for the work of salvation. In Greek theology proper the emphasis is upon what Christ is, not what He did, *i.e.*, on person, not work; but His Person is the guarantee of salvation to those united to Him mystically and sacramentally. This Greek theology was less transactional than the Latin; it was strong when Latin theory was weak, and weak where the other was strong; and it is for us to seek for a synthesis of the two in modern Christianity.

But the tendency of the present day is certainly to emphasize the Greek point of view as against the Latin, and to regard as important what Christ was and is, rather than certain historical facts which were but the illustration and manifestation of His will or personality. His life and death hinge on the one will, and this realisation, once it is ours, will help to purify our theology from many of its unethical elements, and to emphasize more than ever that Christianity is Christ, *i.e.*, our attitude towards a person, and all that He means. We too are

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

seeking for assurance, but we have begun to realise that it will not be found in systems but in life, not in beliefs but in a living and venturing trust which brings its own rewards of power and assurance, and that in this faith Christ is the Captain of our salvation

VII

The desire for assurance is further seen in the interpretation of the historical setting of Christ's death. The actual fact that those responsible for Christ's death were men like ourselves, actuated by similar motives, and in no way conscious of any extraordinary deviation from the ordinary pathway of life, in other words, that "the motives which we regard as good enough for life were found to be bad enough to crucify Jesus of Nazareth," the motives of ambition in the case of Judas, self-interest and cowardice in the case of Pilate, political and economic expediency in the case of the Sadducees, religious prejudice in the case of the Pharisees, and revenge for a great disappointment in the case of the mob, motives from which we act continually—this fact has seemed too terrible for human minds to face, and has been, therefore, disguised by an unjustified, and even unconscious, blackening of characters, which began even in the primitive Church. It was ordinary human sin which crucified Christ, but we seek to make it out to have been extraordinary human sin.

The figure of Judas, in particular, we paint as

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

that of a diabolical arch-traitor, that we may not feel him to be too close to ourselves. Ethically it may be right to paint pictures, which have a direct suggestive value for life, in pure black and white, but, historically at least, the result is sometimes astray from the facts. It is the craving for assurance which demands that we put our "villains" far from ourselves by conceiving of Judas as a monster of treachery, Pilate as a contemptible coward, the Pharisees and Sadducees throughout as time-servers and hypocrites, and so on ; yet we have never entered into the true meaning of the Cross of Christ till we have realised our essential oneness with the men who committed that deed as merely representative of the unregenerate human heart.

The objection to dwelling on the humanity of Christ among "orthodox" Christians arises from the same cause. If Judas is to be thought of as a devil, and not a man, Christ is to be thought of as a God, and not a man ; for the desire for assurance which leads us to put a gulf between ourselves and Judas on the one hand leads us to put a gulf between ourselves and Christ on the other, *i.e.*, if He is to save us, He cannot be one of ourselves ! And yet theology all through has seen the vital importance of Christ's real humanity ; but theology is, and always has been, at a discount among the "orthodox" who live the secondary life of acquiescence or parasitism in our Churches. Idealisation is often an escape from fact, and one of the most usual methods ; but the real, the human, is the essential in religion. The Church

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

has never benefited from an over-drawing of the portraits of Christ, or Paul, or Judas Iscariot ; the real is always more arresting than the fictitious.

VIII

This section of my lecture might be summed up in the thesis that the average Christian consciousness of the past has refused the way of faith. The search for external infallibilities, vain as it is, has been ceaselessly prosecuted in the hope that a way which is not by faith, but by sight, might be discovered ; and here and there men have thought for a while that they had succeeded in finding such a way, but the aftermath has been undeceiving. In the realm of science the way of advance is by hypothesis, and the discovery of chloroform or of aviation may be cited as cases in which definite personal risks had to be taken. In religion, faith simply means the best hypothesis a man has been able to find or frame of the universe as a basis for practical life ; but without works it is dead. Faith cannot be belief without being also venture, risk, trust in the unseen ; and the Christian way of life stands rooted in faith of this sort. But men have shrunk from the heroism of faith ; they have changed the meaning of the word to belief, acquiescence, acceptance of doctrines ; and they have played for safety in the great game of life, in which all real advance is bound up with the venture which will risk all to gain all. The ultimate test of faith in God is the refusal of fear, while the refusal of faith is really

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the refusal of the higher life for which true religion stands.

There have been heroes of the faith in every generation, but the tragedy of the Christian Church is that it has not stood with them, it has stoned and slain them, or it has set them apart as "saints" to be envied, adored and supplicated, but not imitated. If the religion of Christ be true, then the history of Christianity is wrong, and it has so far been but worldliness with a tincture of Christian modes of thought. "The steps of faith fall on the seeming void," but the steps of the modern Churches (taken as a whole) are never planted there with their will, either in finance, or social life, or theology; but still by a remnant we are being saved. The craving for assurance or safety, however natural and even justifiable, must not have pride of place in religion. "My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace, nor even blessing, but Himself, my God." We are learning, too, to-day, that even thought is built up by a will to believe; the will, which is the fundamental attitude of personality, is the all-important factor, and the true way of life is trust in God, begun and maintained by the will, an exercise in which God Himself co-operates with man, so that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

IX

So much for the evil side of the search for assurance, when the emphasis has been thrown,

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

as in the past, upon that particular object of desire ; but we have yet to ask : “ Is there then no comfort in Christ, no consolation of love ? ” Is this perpetual quest of man for assurance and peace of mind a great mistake ; is it really contrary to the spirit of our faith ? Assuredly not ; but it is when we seek first those things which are first, and only then, that all else finds its right place. It is a question of emphasis, not of error on either side. It is the aiming primarily at comfort and safety which is the denial of faith, not its seeking, which is but one activity of a reasonable and healthy mind. The mind of God is peace, and peace is the portion of those who put their trust in Him. The association of peace with God is continual in the Scriptures, and in the records of Christian experience throughout the centuries ; but this peace is only gained through faith, not through self-assurance, but through that self-surrender by which the emphasis is shifted from the ego to the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

But inasmuch as this God of peace is the foundation of all our lives, there are glimpses of the truth of the gospel of consolation in all our experiences ; and inasmuch as they are glimpses of God they are essentially good. We are not to strive at all costs for assurance, but we may nevertheless know that such assurance is of the essence of the best life ; and as part of the best life it must be an object of desire. In the form of certainty we cannot win it for ourselves ; it must be given ; but in the form of peace we have

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

something to do with the gaining and maintaining of a state of mind which in this respect is according to the will of God. Worry and anxiety, mental fever and unrest, torment and fear, are contrary to the will of our Father for His children, and must be controlled and beaten in His strength, as weakening elements in our natures, impairing our efficiency for good, and uprooting our faith. External infallibilities can do nothing finally to help us, but self-control and faith together will, in God's grace, carry us far on the road to the Christian ideal of life.

Moreover, the search for assurance is one form in which the fundamental optimism of human nature expresses itself; and optimism is at bottom nothing but instinctive faith, faith in the purpose of life, in the essential goodness of the universe, and so forth. Now optimism in all our experience makes for life, pessimism for death; the belief in, or the loss of belief in, physical recovery from disease, for example, very largely determines the issue of events for an invalid; and so with mental and spiritual life. Optimism justifies itself by its fruits, *i.e.*, it must be in harmony with the fundamental nature of things, for it extracts from that nature the best possible results. So belief in the good news which is our Gospel is but an explicit form of the belief in the power of goodness and in its final victory, which is the instinctive creed of every sane mind. Thus the life of optimism which believes the best concerning all things is, like the old Stoic ideal of life, "in harmony with (or agreeable to)

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

nature." The conception of safety or assurance is, therefore, fundamentally bound up with a healthy, and, *a fortiori*, with a consecrated life.

This ultimate belief in goodness and safety is one of the surest instinctive elements in religion ; it rests at bottom upon an æsthetic judgment of proportion or fitness, a proportion between our desired life and its fulfilment, between the actual and the ideal. It is an intuition which is intellectually reasonable (even if not logical, *i.e.*, its converse is absurd, though not necessarily illogical) and which has further been tested, as above mentioned, in both mental and physical experience (*i.e.*, at bottom the belief in ultimate goodness is experimental as well as intuitive). This ruling idea of the fitness of things is found as the chief element in the psychology of a healthy conscience, in our belief in God or in the value of human personality, and, above all, in the phenomena of our ordinary common sense, which is reason tightly held in by a sense of fitness or proportion. Faith has been defined as "betting on an unknown certainty," an oxymoron which I think states the truth very well. Atheism is damned, not by logic, but by æsthetic intuitions of incongruity or absurdity. Sanity is one of the great goods of life, and it seems to rest upon proportion and optimism in thought.

Yes : •Christianity has indeed an indubitable message of cheer, a message of spiritual values, of deliverance from bondage, and of a final resolution of the strain between desire and fulfilment, between the ideal and the actual in life.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

But its emphasis, none the less, is upon faith in the sense of venture, rather than upon faith in the sense of belief, for practical life must precede the attainment of system.

x

Faith then—self-surrender, and venture upon God—leads to that assurance of which the heart has an earnest in its present desires ; but the beginning of the new life is this faith. And faith is heroism. The heroes of Christianity are its men of faith, men who have tried and proved the power of God ; indeed, the proof is often so obvious that only prejudice can ignore it as it does. At the beginning stands the faith of Jesus Christ, the author of the Christian experience ; but its reality and its victory even for His followers are both clear to those who read aright the stories of the great souls who had ventured and have not been put to shame, men and women like Paul, Athanasius, Francis of Assisi, Luther, Wesley, Hudson Taylor, Catherine Booth, and thousands of others, some well-known, some little known, but all live coals upon the altar of God, ministering life to all about them lying destitute of the vital flame.

To turn to a point of peculiar interest in this connection, we all deplore the great social evil of gambling, which is to-day almost an institution of our civilisation ; but why, let me ask, is gambling so fascinating to the spirit of man ? Because it is the caricature of a great thing ; it is nothing

Self-Assurance or Self-Protection—II

less than a perverted expression of the instinct for faith. Faith is venture, risking all for all ; gambling is venture too, the risking of a little for a little more. It is thus a distortion of faith, however it may seem to belong to a different world of things, and the psychological driving force is fundamentally the same. The power of the gambling habit is but a testimony to the absence of the faith habit ; the instinct of venture demands an outlet.

In his book "The Varieties of Religious Experience," William James states it as his conviction that Protestantism will be driven back upon voluntary poverty, as the great souls of the Mediæval age were, that the vital elements of venture and romance may return to religion. That is but the same idea in other words. From the heart of Central Africa, Mr. C. T. Studd has written in his "Quaint Rhymes of a Quondam Cricketer"—and it sums up one vital aspect of his own religious faith—"Gamblers for God is what we need." And the fundamental instinct for the heroic, for venture, for faith in the unseen, must be satisfied somehow if life is to have either power or peace. We must gamble with trifles or with life ; and it is not gambling or the sporting spirit which is wrong, but the mean, trifling, sordid, despicable forms in which we seek to satisfy and stifle the desire to be heroic, and to take risks worthy of manhood.

Both Christ and Paul call us to the same absolute trust of ourselves to the unseen, counting all things as loss for that which is the truest gain.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

But faith in this sense has belonged only to vital ages, or great souls ; for the average Christian its meaning has been deftly changed by theologians speaking smooth things, 'and this change in meaning, perceptible in measure even in the Apostolic age, is the result of the same craving for assurance, and longing for an easier path, as I have been speaking of ; for sight, not for faith, as the principle of life. Assurance, as I have said, remains a natural and reasonable desire of the human heart ; but, in the first place, it must never become the dominant factor in life, or in the creation of the forms of religious belief, worship, or practice ; and, in the second place, the true basis of assurance must be sought and found, not in external authorities and infallibilities, or other forms, but in that character of God to which the character of Jesus Christ has led our minds—a character which “ even in hell must still be love ”—and in the grace of God which ministers assurance and peace to those who have fulfilled the conditions of spiritual communion with Him. God, interpreted in history, and known immediately in experience, is the only rock of assurance ; and all else relied on, however popular and however tempting, is quicksand.

So much for our rather prolonged, though still inadequate, study of the factor of self-assurance in the development of Christian forms. We have seen its value, its inevitability, its abuses, and its great dangers ; and it may be that such vision may help to wean us from the things seen and

Self - Assurance or Self - Protection—II

temporal, in which the majority of men have put their trust from age to age, to the things unseen and eternal, through which the remnant of the faithful, who know the truth of God, have found peace and victory.

God is not calling for wise men, He is calling for brave men, to whom He can be Wisdom and Power, no less than Light and Peace ; and Christian faith has been, and still is, in its true nature, the religion of souls that are brave enough to risk everything for the supreme realities of life, brave enough to venture all on, and for, God.

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement;
the Quest of Ideals

SYNOPSIS :—I. Suggestion and the potential in experience ; the anticipatory ethic of Christianity.—II. Belief often the complement of experience.—III. Human ideals, ethical systems, and religious sanctions.—IV. The complementary nature of religious beliefs illustrated from history ; Calvinism and Scotism.—V. The idea of God as self-completion.—VI Self-completion in public worship.—VII. The relation of the Churches to art.—VIII. Illustrations of the subject, religious and secular ; the Christian ministry.—IX. The Atonement and self-completion.—X. The hunger for ideals ; God the ultimate satisfaction of man.

IV

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement ; the Quest of Ideals

I

IN this fourth lecture we come to one of the most interesting of all the subjects upon which I shall touch, the study of the motive of self-completion, which we may define as the desire to add to self those things which are lacking, but regarded as necessary or important for self-development ; that is, we have to do here with the ideals or aspirations of the human soul, the attempt to round off the life or personality by appropriating that which is still unattained, but needful for a full and satisfying Christian existence. Modern psycho-therapy has shown the enormous importance, for physical, mental and moral well-being, of anticipatory treatment, *i.e.*, of suggesting that which is not yet present, but which will tend to become actual under the power of suggestion. In other words we are dealing here with the potential as opposed to the actual in human life : and the proof is already substantially to hand that the potential and the ideal are fully as real as the actual in their power over personality, both on its material and its immaterial sides.

The truth of anticipatory treatment is one of the great truths of Christian faith as applied to human

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

personality. It is God's method of working in relation to humanity ; He takes man on the basis, not of achievement, but desire, not of character, but of faith, treating " things which are not as though they were," if only there be the will towards them. The method is fundamental to Christian ethics in man's treatment of man ; treat a man as better than he is, and, speaking generally, he becomes, or tends to become, so. One might, in passing, refer to the admirable literary illustration of the idea, as one of the fundamental Christian principles, in J. K. Jerome's " Passing of the Third-Floor Back." Mr. Chesterton has said in one of his books, with reference to the question, " Where shall we find the honest man ? " that Christianity has found him in the thief. It is this forward glance of faith which is the great power of the Christian ethic. Christianity is the religion with the ethic of power, and Christianity is no exception to the common observation of to-day that religion is three-fourths suggestion.

Here then we have to do with the great modern conceptions of suggestion and pragmatism. The method of the ideal treatment of personality works in practice when tested, and its success is its proof ; for truth in relation to life is finally that which is true in life, not in the abstract, but in the concrete. The Aristotelian conception that the nature of anything is only known when its τέλος or end is appreciated is most assuredly true of human nature. " Man " is not a word definable save in terms of his destiny ; he is a

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

compound of brute and angel, a creature in the progress of becoming, and his true nature or end is a matter of faith ; but, treat him from the standpoint of that future, and he responds by becoming more like it. It is so that faith justifies and proves itself experimentally. The uplift and regeneration of human nature is the work of those who believe that man is better than he seems, potentially, that is ; and the treatment of him as essentially divine, in spite of all his failure and degradation, is one of the chief conditions of raising him. The Christian ethic and the Christian doctrine of salvation are both alike proleptic in relation to man and his amelioration ; the response to anticipatory treatment demonstrates both the potential goodness of human nature as made in the image of God, and the power of suggestion to make it actual ; and the success of the method is the experimental verification of faith.

II

Now in the course of Christian history men have again and again realised their failures and their defects ; and in the forms of their faith, which above all else minister suggestion to them, they have sought to embody the answers to these realised needs of their souls in the shape of ideals or aspirations. External forms are the chief media of religious suggestion, and in them we naturally expect to find, and find in fact, men's realisation of their needs, and the remedies which they have discovered or attempted to provide for

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

them. The things which a man emphasizes as important in religion *may* be the result of positive past experience, but more frequently they are the things he knows himself to lack. Need is, of course, an integral element in experience, but it is negative in quality. Once it has been satisfied, indeed, positive experience is present ; but there are many felt needs of man never adequately met in this life, where therefore such verification is out of the question, such as the cravings for immortality or perfect happiness ; yet man believes in their ultimate satisfaction for one reason or another, but primarily because he feels he must.

In this way we see that a man's faith is, in large part, not the expression of his experience, but its complement ; need gives cogency to all arguments which point to the need in question being met, and not without reason. The Kantian formula "I must, therefore I can," is at bottom an æsthetic perception of the fitness of things, and in theology it appears frequently as an unconscious apologetic in the slightly altered form, "I must, or need, to believe, therefore I can, and do." This sense of fitness, proportion, harmony, congruity, coherence, or whatever you may call it, is one of the most fundamental intuitions of thought, and is but the affirmation of the ultimate reasonableness and purpose of all things ; it is a form of the intuitive belief in God. Sane reason rather than petty logic is here, as in all the great problems, the guide of the soul.

It is in theological systems, creeds and confessions, that this self-completion by ideals, this

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

holding to the things which we do not know but which we require to believe to satisfy our own minds and to better our own lives, is chiefly to be found. Our minds must find rest—we know it—and our lives must have ideals beyond them to inspire and exalt them. In the search for assurance we have something cognate to the present subject, but in this section I am concerned, not so much with the satisfaction of the desires for safety and comfort, as with the satisfaction of the higher desires for the completion of character by the addition of what is lacking. Let me grant that this lecture and the last two overlap considerably ; the same is true of all these lectures, and of all attempts to divide up the unity of thought ; for all our thinking is bound up together, and clear-cut division is impossible. At the same time, I think it is easy and natural to distinguish between the lower and the higher elements in man's sense of need, between the natural or instinctive search for self-preservation, and the spiritual and intuitive quest for self-enlargement ; and that is fundamentally the distinction I am drawing in these two classes.

We are dealing, then, in this lecture with man's higher needs, his aspirations, ideals and intuitions ; for intuition proper is spiritual vision of those things which are not yet so appropriated by life as to have been systematised by reason. Intuition is passing into reason all the time, but intuition still abides. Needs are but the converse of God, if " He has made us for Himself," and our ultimate intuition is the intuition of God, of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

that infinite fact which can take upon it a multitude of shapes and meanings. Intuition then is primarily a man seeing with his own eyes ; it is a knowledge of values which judges all that is relevant to itself. The intuitional basis of religion is surely sufficiently clear in relation to the value of personality, the goal of personality, its unity and freedom, the existence of the human need of, and satisfaction in God, and so forth : just those elements which defy logical analysis, but which are fundamental to the Christian standpoint.

III

All men, whatever their philosophical point of view, whatever their religious sympathies, the atheist as much as the theist, require for life an ethical system, a system of ideals and principles of action ; and for these systems some kind of sanction is required by the rational mind. Some men, by a species of philosophy of history or evolution, imagine, though vainly, that they have discovered substitutes for moral sanctions ; but the substitutes always fail in the matter of the sense of obligation, and obligation and conscience still remain unsystematised conceptions. But the ordinary man cannot cheat himself into regarding historical facts as moral sanctions, he cannot regard the sense of duty as explained by deductions from the past, nor the content of duty as defined by any such external investigation. The subjectivity of moral consciousness, its intuitional foundations, and the relativity of its

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

practical applications, elude analysis ; and, what is more, man finds himself unable logically to cope with the practical problems presented to him in this sphere. No man is able rationalistically to reach a scientific basis, or a logical system, in the matter of ethics ; and the best the mind of man can do, apart from a logical estimate of probable results (where satisfactorily attainable), is to accept the intuitional basis, however conceived in origin or content, and, where it fails him, or seems silent in the face of his questionings, to adopt some system of ethics resting on past experience and authority and purified by contact with religion (as the search after the pure, the true, the lovely and the good), and then courageously stake himself upon the system he has chosen.

Not all men can accept an equally large proportion of authority or sanction, but all accept some measure of it, and it is usually in religion that these ethical systems are sought and found. Criticism of all systems is right and necessary ; but only a fool can believe that systems of ethics have been built up on anything except experience. Ethical systems are all confessions of faith, however men may delude themselves into thinking them scientific, and in relation to them we must have our theories, both as to their content and their origin, *i.e.*, our doctrines of faith, revelation, and the like ; it is sheer absurdity to regard these things as part and parcel only of organised religion—they belong to all conscious morality. The institutions of society in particular, in which ethical systems are crystallised, represent

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

a long and painful process of experiment and criticism, and have reasonable claims to our allegiance, unless we are more or less sure of our ground in disagreeing with and refusing them.

Religion, then, for the average man, is largely an ethical system with authoritative sanctions, and, as such, religion is an essential of a social being—it is the relation in life of self and not-self, which is most easily conceived as the relation of self and God (the All who includes all lesser not-selves, and even all that is of self except our egoism). But ethical systems demand ideals, as their sources of inspiration and as expressions of the goals to be aimed at in life, *i.e.*, ethical systems must in actual fact be higher and better than those who use them, or they fail to inspire confidence or call forth obedience. Water cannot rise above its own level, and ethical systems must be framed by something or someone above the average of human life, *i.e.*, in some sense by God directly, or by the great souls of the past. These two alternatives largely coalesce in view of the facts that for man God is only revealed in and to men, and that most of the ethical leaders of humanity have claimed such inspiration or revelation from above.

Christian forms, then, both of thought and practice, and Christian institutions are the answers to man's craving for ethical and spiritual guidance; institutions represent the ethical systems of the past, not always as yet perfectly assimilated; creeds, confessions and theologies generally represent the aspirations and ideals of man's moral nature, some verified, some unverified, but all

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

in some measure felt to be necessary, as either the expression or the complement of experience ; forms of worship and religious observance, again, are media of suggestion to raise, ennoble, guide and instruct human nature in its great search for God, and in its service of Him. This conception of self-completion is therefore most important in relation to the development of Christian forms.

IV

But forms, as observed before, represent temperament in large degree ; and in the history of the search for self-completion we are struck at once by a temperamental difference not only in forms but in ideals. For example, the typical Roman Catholic and the typical Protestant ideals differ widely, and, what is more, not always in a way that reflects the actual difference in experience or temperament ; sometimes rather the comparison seems to lie in the opposite direction, and to point, not to the type of personalities underlying the systems in question, but to the complement of these personalities. In theology, as said before, men often express their past experience ; but quite as frequently, and with more vehemence, they express by negation the defects of their actual natures, *i.e.*, they express the spiritual truths and realities of which they feel the need to round off and balance their personalities. Pride, where sincerity coexists, always has a theology which emphasizes meekness and humility ; the humble mind on the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

other hand will realise the needs of independence and freedom, and posit them as cardinal virtues.

Let us take from history one great and striking example. In post-Reformation theology the two great sections of the Church, Roman and Protestant, adopted, generally speaking, two opposed points of view in their religious thought, the Calvinistic or Augustinian, and the semi-Pelagian or Scotist. The former was explicitly adopted by the Protestants of Northern Europe, the latter by the Catholics of the South, at the Synod of Dort and the Council of Trent respectively. What does this mean? It means that Protestantism stood by a theory of absolute dependence, and Roman Catholicism by a theory of semi-independence. Now, frankly, do "dependence" and "independence" represent respectively the Protestant and the Romanist types at all adequately, as we know them in history? Only when interchanged in their order, *i.e.*, as it stands the statement is the opposite or converse of the truth. The whole of Roman Catholic piety, character and religion tends to weaken independence by its authority, its priesthood, its ideals of holiness, etc.—Roman Catholicism is the mystic religion of absolute dependence, and that it has produced the great Christian mystics is a proof of my contention. Again, Calvinism, in the concrete of life, as distinct from its doctrine, stood for strength and independence, and has worked itself out in rationalism and moralism rather than mysticism; in the Reformation era and ever since, the Protestantism, which found its great systematic

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

theologian in Calvin, has connoted and buttressed the idea of human freedom, and a virility of ethical and religious life.

The qualities inherent in the two confessions represent, not the types of character involved, but their complements ; for man's relation to man is the test of what he is, while his relation to God, embodied in his creeds, is the test of what he desires to become. A Protestant could afford to be a Calvinist because the other side of the picture, *i.e.*, the conceptions of morality and freedom (and all men recognise the strong moral type produced by Calvinism, which theoretically should have issued in antinomianism, if creeds be taken to represent actual positions), was the presupposition of everyday life ; there was no need for such a man to emphasize independence. The Roman Catholic could not afford to be a Calvinist, he had to emphasize the practical and moral, not the mystic side of things, because mysticism and dependence were the atmosphere of the Church which he breathed. Had the statements been drawn up in an age of peace, they would no doubt have been fuller and less opposed in their theology ; but opposition made each side emphasize the things it needed most, and those were, not so much the things it was sure of in experience, as the things which it realised it must add to experience as ideal and suggestive conceptions.

This aim of self-completion runs through all the history of the higher religions. Men's creeds and manuals of devotion are their formulæ

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

of suggestion, and must contain much which is not realised though believed to be realisable, not actual in experience but ideal in aspiration and purpose ; and what, on the other hand, is regarded as certain, and is assumed as a presupposition of life, is often omitted from controversial statements of faith, because it appears so obvious, and therefore unnecessary to specify ; attention is fixed upon other items, especially those felt as necessary to complete and safeguard the system. Thus a strange fact comes to light, viz., that the essential elements in belief are often not to be found except inferentially in the creeds of Churches.

The "Apostles' Creed" contains no explicit reference, for example, to the love of God or the brotherhood of man, or the essential worth of personality—these things are presupposed ; the Westminster Confession of Faith contains but one meagre and unemphasized statement of the love of God, has a very small place for a social gospel, and has little or nothing to say of the value of the human soul ; in fact the whole theology seems to weaken such a conception. Time-honoured words like "Father," "Eternal Life," etc., may contain the ideas by inference, but it is strange to find central conceptions only stated indirectly. Admitting that the Calvinistic type was somewhat Judaic in its extraordinary emphasis upon the justice of God and upon human insignificance, the "Apostles' Creed" of the early Church remains unaccounted for, except by the theory that the presuppositions of

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

religion, its essential and primary elements, are not felt to need the same statement as controverted points ; and behind the baptismal confessions of the early Church we must remember there lie as a background the heresies of the age. The love of God was common ground, therefore unconsciously the faith is stated polemically, by ignoring the common ground and asserting the controverted truth against contemporary error.

It is unfortunate, but almost inevitable, that this should have happened so often in the history of our faith, for it were better to be positive than controversial ; and those alien to the Church can only gather the impression of strife and wrangling from these sectarian proclamations of the different sections of Christendom. Man forgot the undebated common ground, which ought to have been the foreground, but which remained the background, chiefly under the influences of polemical exaggeration, and of the desire for self-completion which led men to emphasize the complementary, as opposed to the verified, ideas of Christian belief. In passing I may add that in this section I am chiefly concerned with the forms of *belief*, as the ideal is more usually to be sought in belief than in institution and observances, which latter, on the whole, rather reflect the past than they foreshadow the future.

I have spoken of creeds and confessions of faith as mirroring to some extent the thirst for self-completion ; and I wish to develop that point further in its relation to fundamental

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

ethical questions. Religious experience in relation to ethics falls naturally into two great divisions, according as the dominant note in the personality is independence or dependence. In some cases, individual or collective, the emphasis is in practice upon human freedom and responsibility, and upon the distinction of the human will from the divine, with the natural result of a practical moralism and deism, and, not infrequently, rationalism. In other cases, individual or collective, the emphasis is in practice upon human dependence and divine immanence, the human and divine wills being conceived of as more organically associated, and even in some respects identified as the human seems to be swallowed up in the divine, with the natural result of a practical pantheism and mysticism.

Now the emphasis in practice tends, as I have said before, to differ from the emphasis in theory, for one's ethical theory usually embodies a "self-completing system"; and hence the emphasis in theory is often upon the complement of one's actual practice and experience, rather than upon that actual practice and experience itself. A one-sided emphasis on either the mystic or the moralist ethic has in history stultified itself, and given clear proof of the danger of such lack of proportion; for both are true, and Christianity moves between a pantheism and a deism with a conception of God as both transcendent and immanent. Hence in the formal expression of belief men have usually been led, in the interests of mental and moral balance, to express with

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

especial emphasis those things which are the complement of their own certainties, as no less necessary to the ideal of life, and as more likely to be ignored than those on the other side, if not given definite suggestive shape in the formulæ of belief.

That is, what is assumed in a man's thought is not usually the point stressed ; the emphasis is upon what is lacking, or, to be more correct, what is realised as lacking. As I have said earlier, Protestantism was Calvinistic, Augustinian, Pauline, in its ethic, rather than Pelagian, Scotist or Jewish, because it could afford to be so ; the side of independence and moral strength was already present and assumed : what is written on the history of Scotch Presbyterianism, for example, is not antinomianism but a strong morality. Southern Europe, sure of its dependence by both ecclesiastical discipline and mystical temperament, must rather stress the other side in a semi-Pelagian ethical system, which became more explicit after the Reformation than ever before. I do not, of course, claim that these generalizations cover the whole field in Reformation and post-Reformation controversy and experience, but I think that they provide an illuminating hypothesis which is not untrue to a great number of the facts.

v

Perhaps the most important case of this completion of personality is to be found in the conceptions of God which have been accepted or formulated in history. The very idea of God in its barest form is a case of self-completion ; and

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the enlargements of the idea by the conceptions of God's attributes and actions also fall largely into the same category. It is not that men have had no experimental verifications of their doctrine, but such verification is partly by proxy (*i.e.*, by great souls who have handed on their experience) and partly is not so convincing as to carry the reason with it, apart from the corresponding sense of need which the doctrine meets. The idea of God, where accepted, is always a judgment of the whole personality, for no part of the personality alone can give the satisfaction which life demands; experience, speculation, logic, feeling, the practice of life, all contribute to the cumulative proof of God's existence, which, however, is never such as to turn the life of faith into a life of certainty. It is in the step of faith staking its all upon God, not as a certainty but as the most reasonable hypothesis of life, that human experience enters the atmosphere of heroism and of great achievement. In words borrowed from Donald Hankey, "I bet my life that there is a God," and I do so, not only because hope, desire and intuition seem to carry me towards that conception, not only because the past supports the view both in history and in my individual experience, but chiefly, I think, because the idea, with its implications, satisfies my deepest cravings and finds in them, by exact correspondence, a verification which leads me to say with Augustine—"Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

In a later lecture I shall expand this thought, especially in relation to the æsthetic and intuitive elements in consciousness, which demand an expression of themselves, in such terms as are given by the idea of God, as their rationale and their fulfilment (*vide* Study No. V). The idea, at all events, seems to be a practical necessity of thought in some form—even those who deny it (and their numbers in any age are very few, and are probably considerably less to-day than in some former ages) are usually found to hold it in a more meagre form, which is also largely a depotentiated form. The scientist's worship of Truth, the artist's homage to Beauty, the philanthropist's service of Goodness, are all the service of the one God under different names ; the sense of obligation, whether to goodness, truth, or beauty, is at bottom the sense of worship ; but partial worship means partial power, and the greatest power for all that is good has, as history attests, been with those whose sense of and conception of God has been fullest. The self-completion, then, of which I have spoken, is not a mere search, but a successful search ; the heart panting after God is satisfied : and the idea of God, framed according to need, does not remain a mere idea, but becomes a fact of experience, as needs *are* satisfied and personality progressively completed.

VI

When we turn ~~to~~ the institutional side of religion we find the same thing as on the dogmatic.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Institutions are moulded, or remoulded from time to time, that they may be adequate as media of suggestion, suggesting to man those things which he needs but either has not, or has in insufficient measure. In the "Catholic" Churches in particular, great emphasis is laid upon the external aids to devotion in the form of buildings and their accessories, dramatic acts, methods of worship and tangible helps to reverence and meditation. Ritual, properly understood, is not, or should not be, an empty thing; even idols are by the more educated heathen regarded as but aids to devotion: but the danger of limiting the idea of God by visible forms is obvious. Inevitable, undoubtedly, is the need to localise and define God for thought, whether symbolically or logically, but the history of religion is a history of the dangers of forms. All Churches are ritualistic in their habits of worship, as men are ritualistic in the ordinary actions of life, such as putting on their clothes or taking their dinners; and ritual is inevitable; but some temperaments demand it more than others. Happy are those who can strike the right mean in its use, and so, while using, avoid abusing; but let us remember that the proportion of ritual is a variable thing according to social and individual temperament.

In the Roman Catholic community the demand for external aids to worship is greater than in Protestantism, and it is not a mere love of show which creates it, but a need of suggestive forms in a religion which is temperamentally æsthetic rather than intellectual, mystic rather than rationalist.

Self - Completion or Self - Enlargement

In Roman, Greek and English Catholicism the suggestive use of forms for self-completion is a dominant note ; its architecture, its arrangement of church interiors, with an altar as pivot, where Protestantism in its native forms has set the pulpit—the one type standing for priest, the other for prophet, as the ideal of ministry—its elaborate and sensuous representations of religious truth in sacraments and liturgical posturings, its employment of incense, stained glass, statuary, pictures, beads, and the like, to guide and stimulate the imagination or other mental powers—all are used with the purpose, conscious or subconscious, of inducing a right frame of mind and spirit, a frame of mind and spirit conducive to humble worship and right action. The very interior of such churches, gloomy and mysterious, wherein art, architecture and arrangement all combine their powers of suggestion, produces a feeling of unworldliness which it is easy both to appreciate and to depreciate. The drunkard, we are told, seeks in alcohol an escape from life as it is into a more interesting environment, and the churches in question aim at supplying in a better way the same sense of a refuge from the world, a place unlike our ordinary environment, in which we can realise that our life here is but a pilgrimage and our true home beyond ; they offer to the jaded spirit, which understands their forms, a change of mental condition by a change of sensible surroundings, a sense of God and infinity, a sense almost of fairyland or heaven in the midst of life.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

And this is not necessarily wrong, though criticism at this point is easy. It is easy to point out that our religion should be real, and conceived in terms of this life, or it is not virile and genuine, and is but an opiate, not a true refreshment ; but one feels that such criticism is but a half-truth, and that the truth proper lies between the two extremes. Human life is too complex a thing to be solved by simple rule of thumb ; the green slopes of the Galilean hills may be a better temple of God than Westminster Abbey, but both alike have their place. It is a matter of relativity at bottom, and actual values vary according to circumstance and temperament. But it is at least indisputable that all Churches have in measure aimed at providing, in their buildings and their accessories, means whereby the human soul may rest and refresh itself in the atmosphere of God, and of the great ideals which urge the soul forward upon the task of social and individual self-completion.

Protestantism has had its own formalism, as a very little thinking will show us, and in its churches it is the idea of prophecy or inspiration which is interpreted in architecture and arrangement. The pulpit is the centre of interest, and from it is delivered the eternal Gospel, and from it usually, though not always, the Scriptures are read. For Protestantism the sermon and the Bible have taken the places of the altar and the sacraments as the supreme vehicles of grace ; and Protestant architecture has demonstrated this, in the past at least, though to-day forms of

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

architecture and arrangement are being borrowed from other communions, often apart from their meanings. It is the written and spoken word which is the chief medium of suggestion for Protestantism, for, if Catholicism be predominantly æsthetic, Protestantism is predominantly intellectual in its values, and the native forms of a Church group themselves round its primary values. But both aim in institutional forms at that suggestion, which, by the grace of God, is the surest human means of salvation or self-completion.

VII

In connection with this use of outward forms for ideal suggestion, the attitude of the Churches towards art is a very interesting subject of inquiry. It is the natural result of the temperamental factors with which I have been dealing that the Catholic churches have fostered art and the Protestant more or less ignored it. Art was rejected in the great anti-Romanist reaction of the sixteenth century as part and parcel of the older system which it had helped to support, but we have here surely a casting away of the wheat with the chaff, of the pearls with the dross. Protestantism revealed itself as iconoclastic for Puritan reasons in relation to art, and, speaking generally, that attitude of rejection continued in relation to art until the recent rapprochement between the various Churches. I may say in passing that I am not rash enough definitely to class the English Church among the Protestant Churches; its present position of compromise was either explicit

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

or implicit in every generation since the days of Henry VIII, and in relation to art it certainly imbibed and fostered the Catholic standpoint. The æsthetic and mystical piety of Catholicism was able to make use of the suggestive power of art in large measure, where the more intellectual genius of Protestantism either ignored it as unnecessary or rejected it as an instrument of the Devil. In Protestantism its seductive power was realised and feared, and the forms which early Protestantism evolved can hardly be spoken of as possessing beauty and grace, even if they show strength and vigour ; and, what is more, the character it nurtured had the same weakness as its forms.

The moral value of art is still a keenly debated subject. Tolstoy has tried to teach us that all true art is moral, and that it is moral value which makes true art. But the artists still resist the assumption of the relation between beauty and goodness herein implied, though, strangely enough, it is the relation implied in the Greek word *καλός*—and our super-æsthetes all boast of their Hellenism. Protestantism, at least, has still to learn both that beauty has an intrinsic value of its own in all life, and therefore presumably in religion, and that it has also a practical moral value which, if not intrinsic, is at least a real one through the powers of suggestion which it can enhance or evoke. The Devil, after all, must not be left with all the best weapons in the things of this earth. The churches of the Reformation faith, bare and barn-like structures

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

at the first, are even yet, in their modified ugliness, a commentary upon the æsthetic defects of the personalities behind them, defects which well enough explain Protestantism's lack of mystics, of the sense of worship, of the sense of dependence, its divisions, its rationalistic and sceptical tendencies, and the like, which so often we deplore ; for beauty, worship, intuition, mysticism and the sense of unity, all seem to be cognate things, bound up together in the history and practical expressions of religious psychology. There is a great deal which Protestantism has yet to learn from its opponents, and fortunately it is showing itself to be not yet too proud to learn.

VIII

The forms of public worship, again, have their suggestive or self-completing aspect, and it is an important one. Prayer is undoubtedly aspiration in large part, *i.e.*, it is the putting of the self in line with the ideal by innervation of the higher desire-centres, through choosing, and by attention enhancing, the noblest wishes of the heart. Prayer has undoubtedly much of the same value as the practice of auto-suggestion, and this applies to both free and liturgical prayers. Public praise again is but a form of prayer, in which the poetical and musical forms employed both give variety to the exercise of prayer, and increase its power by emotional reinforcements ; thus public praise has also a great suggestive or self-completing value for the personality and for the Church. This fact has been clearly realised by

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

those responsible for evangelistic work, and the value and use of singing in mission services are beyond all doubt, either as preparing for, or as conveying, the message of the missionaries.

When we turn to the institution of the ministry itself we find many traces of the same quest of ideals, especially as embodied by the community in the profession of the clergyman. However we may account for the origin and the first development of the ministry, and however we may evaluate the different forms which it has assumed in different ages and communions, we must recognise that for the institution of the ministry, during the greater part of the history, we have not merely the support but the demand of the community, which seeks living representatives of its social and individual ideals, set apart to stand for those ideals and to present them to others. Society demands that some shall be found to suggest to it continually the higher aspirations and needs of life ; it is the demand for a kind of psycho-therapy on a large scale. Thus the ministry is the ethical framework of society, supported by public opinion in its representation and continual repetition of eternal values to a world tending to be engrossed in the affairs of this earth. It is to such a feeling that the exemption of clergymen from military service, for example, has derived its strength ; they are the representatives of Peace and Goodwill, and to violate that standing can only strike at their social value for ethical inspiration.

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

It is extraordinary to note how deep this demand for ideals is ; audiences often seem to crave for teaching which shall run counter to their everyday practice rather than for a semi-divine approval of their standards of life ; castigation in hard, biting and fault-finding sermons on social and kindred subjects is not disliked by church-goers, but actually appreciated, except sometimes by those whose criticism is in the best sense religious. The truth is that for a sane life ideals are urgently needed, and it is not felt to be an easy thing to find them ; for progressive life men know that they are imperiously demanded—again the pragmatist test of their truth. The craving which lies behind the great output and success of “idealistic” novels (inferior often in literary quality though they may be) is the same which is evidenced in the common regard for the clergy, for church buildings, and for the ordinances of religion. It is not at bottom a sacerdotal theory of ecclesiastical writers which underlies the conception of priesthood—a conception to which all ministers in all Churches tend to approximate in measure—but the facts of human nature as known to us, in particular its weakness and failure to think and believe for itself, and its craving for spiritual suggestion and moral ideals. The responsibility for priestcraft thus lies ultimately with the laity ; but even apart from priestcraft, the ministry of the Church as an institution springs out of actual human needs, and among these needs the need of self-completion by ideals is a dominant one:

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

In this connection it is further interesting to note how this ideal demand in relation to the ministry has crystallised in history in the theory of a "spiritual estate." The requirement that the clergy shall represent ideals has gone further than the demand that they shall be better than ordinary men on their plane ; it has actually set them upon a different plane in the ethical requirements expected ; they are "religious" by vocation, and others are "lay" or "secular." The constitution of the Mediæval double morality, a morality for the average man of average requirements, and a higher and more exacting morality for those publicly identified with religion, has a complicated history, but the most fundamental factor is undoubtedly the ideal demand made by the ordinary man of the world for an "unworldly" ministry. A higher level of life was asked, and is asked, from monk and nun, priest and minister, as a standing reminder of spiritual things and of their unchanging price.

In passing, it is worth noticing that woman in the past has also often been treated in the same way ; women have been expected to be purer than men, and the public degradation of a woman has always been felt to be more serious than that of a man. For example, a woman drunkard awakens greater pity and disgust than a male offender ; even in relation to smoking the chief objection, now almost overruled, is that woman is thereby lowering herself to man's (less ideal) level ! In the East the harem or zenana system is often rested by its apologists on the same foundation,

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

the semi-divine position of womanhood, which, along with the facts of life, demands for it other laws and greater safeguards than manhood ; and undoubtedly men do tend to hide and fence about their sacred things, of which ideal womanhood is one, in all the higher races at least. Strange indeed are the forms that the quest for ideals has created and maintained.

IX

The relation of my thesis to the doctrine of the Atonement is a very interesting one. The most striking fact with regard to the historical attempts to express a doctrine of the work of Christ in relation to human salvation is the multitude of theories which we meet. Speaking of the varieties of text in the Latin Bible of his day, Jerome said "*quot homines, tot codices*," and we may almost say similarly of theories of the Atonement that they are as many as the theologians. Nor ought this fact really to be a matter of surprise ; for the theory of salvation, being fundamental to religion, must rest upon and spring out of individual experience. It is simply the variety of human experience which is reflected in the variety of theories of Atonement, and of that experience the most potent element is realised need. It is need realised and faced as a practical problem which has given cogency to all the historical formulations of the work of Christ. As needs have differed, so have men's theories of salvation ; but it is important to realise the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

role played by need in the formation of these theories.

As said before, the silent argument of the soul here is practically the Kantian argument of the fitness or coherence of the moral order—"Morally I need to believe this, therefore morally I can and do believe it." Representative theories, moral influence theories, substitutionary theories, where sincere, and not merely second-hand theology taken over uncomprehendingly from Scripture, tradition, or authority of some kind, all start, in spite of their multifariousness, from the experience of man ; but it is the negative rather than the positive elements which count primarily in this matter, *i.e.*, it is self-completion which is chiefly sought and found in a theory of Atonement. Such theories have been proved in experience to be practical and efficacious, particularly by their power of suggesting to the mind those truths, or spiritual and mental food, which it needs. The acceptance of such theories or schemes of salvation by the repentant soul is thus at bottom largely an intuitive or æsthetic perception of proportion or the fitness of things, in the relation between realised need and the satisfaction which is found for it.

But a word of warning is here necessary ; suggestion may produce ill-health as surely as health, and, in religion, feelings of need may be artificially produced by a preacher, a book, or a system. It is true that no such feeling can arise without some basis in truth in a sane mind ; but it may assume, under direction, a form which is

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

unreal, and the mind may then be induced, also under direction, to accept some stereotyped theory which, for the personality in question, is also unreal. We need independence of thought and experience in nothing more than in the doctrine of salvation ; and it is this unreality of second-hand thinking and experience which is chiefly hampering the Church in its mission to-day, and which is helping to create and maintain the bitter divisions within it which we all agree in deploring. Let no man be afraid to be absolutely genuine in his thought of God, of Christ, of salvation, or anything else ; let no man try to fit his own personality into the forms of another, unless it actually fits into them naturally—and this is not likely to be entirely true in any case.

x

In passing, one might observe that the search for ideals is one of Nature's highest hungers—I use "Nature" as a synonym for the ordered providence of God. Hunger is one of nature's great devices for maintaining and developing life, and this hunger for ideals is a sure sign of man's upward movement and an earnest of his final destiny ; the higher life already implanted in the race must be fed. If the economic need for bread is a dominant thing in life, the story of the martyrs and the saints is a proof that man's higher nature has an even greater need of the higher bread which is the true "Word of God." The quest of self-completion is the prophecy of its own

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

fulfilment, as surely as there is a purpose running through all things ; and God's method of evolution produces no hungers or desires which are purposeless or untimely in their appearing ; if they do not belong to the past, then we know that they must belong to the future.

This leads me to my final word. The full complementation of life is God Himself, and all ideals and aspirations, and in a sense even actual desires, are a craving, though misunderstood and misdirected often, for that ultimate reality and satisfaction which are to be found nowhere else than in God ; and when I say " God " I do not use the word theologically, but as representing those things which God is—Love, Truth, Beauty, Peace, Power, Wisdom, Health, and so forth. It is the fundamental unity of man's search and the fundamental unity of its satisfaction for which the conception of God stands ; and that unity, I think, is both necessary for thought and in harmony with the highest experience. God is the All, and in relation to Him all things find their places and proportions, and every need is felt to be met and every strain resolved ; nor is there any other conception which can do this.

The search for ideals, for self-completion, is the search for God. That hunger of the heart has taken many forms both in literature and in experience, but at bottom every heart, consciously or subconsciously, *i.e.*, understanding or not understanding its needs, is crying, " Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." And He has been found by the humble, the sincere, the

Self-Completion or Self-Enlargement

brave, the unselfish, and with Him has been found satisfaction for the whole man. There has been found in Him, in particular, that rest of mind and heart which is a proof that in some sense the end of the quest has been reached, that hunger has been stilled, and strain relieved.

But such self-completion has only been found, and can only be found, in personality ; and philosophical doubts of the personality of God have never been able to subvert the religious experience of triumphant souls, that God is personal in the highest and fullest sense. Philosophy may declare that personality is that which divides man from man, " me " from " you," and " you " from " him " ; but the soul which has attained unto God, even in small measure, knows that the contrary is true, that God is perfect personality, and that all our personality is but the reflection or offspring of His, finding in Him its completion. If philosophers seek to reach God by removing from Him, as relative, all that makes human nature what it is, they reach but an abstraction of thought, of which only negative definitions can be given, *i.e.*, denials of our experience. It is when all that is regarded as of real value in human nature is taken as our starting point, and these conceptions of value carried back, as in ethics, to ultimate reality as their source and ground—human excellences and values being therein raised to their highest degree—that we get a worthy conception of God. Inclusion, not exclusion, is the method of correct analysis ; and, when this has been done,

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

we are left with a self-evidencing conception of God, in which our minds can rest, and in which we can find the self-completion of character which we all crave. The thirst of life can find no final and permanent satisfaction except in God, for "man's true end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."

Self-Expression or Self-Projection ; the
Embodiment of Experience. Part I

SYNOPSIS:—I. The place of experience in the study of religion.—II. Forms as the crystallisation of experience.—III. Priesthood and authority.—IV. History as a source of religious beliefs; the place of interpretation.—V. The foundations of reason and the doctrine of God.—VI. The relation of sanity to faith.—VII. The Atonement and self-expression.—VIII. Religious beliefs and the need of verification.—IX. Self-expression in religious institutions; interaction of religion and politics.

V

Self-Expression or Self-Projection ; the Embodiment of Experience. Part I

I

WE come to-day to the expression in Christian forms of positive experience, past or present. Turning, then, first to the question of past experience, *i.e.*, events or happenings of the days and years that are gone, such events or facts cannot for the mind exist apart from the interpretation or understanding of them ; and experience, which is usually taken as connoting knowledge, really connotes interpretation by the human understanding, which is as near to real knowledge as man is likely to come by the processes of ratiocination. It is, of course, important to remember the real distinction between objective knowledge, which we have not got, and subjective interpretation, which is our knowledge ; the fact of the distinction accounts for much in religious experience otherwise hard to understand, in particular the fact that what convinces one leaves another unbelieving, or that men differ in the values they attach to certain events or experiences.

All life is in measure self-expression, as are also *a fortiori* all art, all science, all religion, which are but aspects of life ; and thus self-expression, while it is only one of various factors producing

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

external forms, is one of the most valuable ; for, obviously, what rests on experience, even with the modifications of private interpretation, is bound to be more genuine and natural than that which is produced by psychological factors which, if powerful, are little understood or capable of analysis by any of us. Let us admit at once that neither is the proportion of any religion which is founded on such actual experience so great as generally supposed, nor is that experience itself a fixed or universally reliable thing. Experience, or rather the mental evaluation of experience, varies with mood, health, occupation and environment, even in the case of the one individual. Times of absolute certitude give way to times of doubt, exaltation to depression ; interpretations, and even premises, change, and mentality remains in a flux in spite of all its unity. Nothing seems so tragic in religion as the sense of assurance lost, or the realization that past experiences have ceased to repeat themselves—

“Oh, that it were as it hath been,
When, praying in the holy place,
Thy power and glory I have seen
And marked the footsteps of Thy grace.”

Most of us have had our moments on the mountain top, moments of certainty, of exaltation, of self-forgetfulness, of mystery, of adoration, deep peace, or triumphant joy. But they do not stay ; not even Paul, not even Christ Himself, had an unbroken sense of their abiding. The gospels and the epistles are full of the doubt, the depression, the stress, which are contrary to the human love

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

of ease, but which make life great and heroic. The emotional variations of the nervous system are present even in the noblest of lives, and human character is forged, not in comfort, but in conflict. The moments of vision are given to help us when our eyes shall fail to see because the battle is so sore, and experience remains an inspiration even when it is no longer actual.

But all spiritual power for service rests finally upon experience. By conflict a man may be delivered, but once the deliverance has come he has something to impart to others, and his experience becomes the starting point of a new power to help. Faith must make the first step in all upward climbing of the soul, but, once victory has been given even in small measure, a man has something which he must seek to express in outward form, for the word of the Lord is become a fire in his bones. Such experience of victory, if not vital to the quest for God—which still remains a good, even if a man were to fail of his objective—is at least vital to the power of religion for uplifting the world. The man with good news will always have the advantage of the man with good advice, and therein lies the rationale of the Christian Gospel.

II

I have said that the proportion of forms founded upon actual experience is not so great as is generally supposed. Nevertheless all through the history, and all through the content, of Christian forms and institutions, we find this expression of actual experience present. In the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

doctrines of Atonement, experience, if not the starting point of theories, has been their verification and the cause of their continued vitality ; in the doctrines of the sacraments and other institutions of the Church, actual experience has lain behind their development and the tenacity with which they have been held. One very obvious example is the institution of the Lord's Day, the weekly feast of the Resurrection, embodying the actual experience of Apostolic men concerning a risen or living Christ which provided the primitive Church with its first gospel, and upon which historically the Church as a militant association was built. Whit-Sunday and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit again are forms institutional and doctrinal resting upon the experience which began with Pentecost, and which was so often repeated in the early Christian community.

But the forms which rest thus upon the experience of historical facts of deliverance and blessing, and the like, are fewer than one is at first inclined to imagine, and for this reason in particular—that forms are largely social things, and such experiences largely individual. The experience of the individual—and such experience is one of the fundamental things in true religion—does not tend often to create social forms ; and Christian forms exist by social sanction and adoption. The other elements which I have been discussing as creative of forms are things more or less common to man, but individual experience remains individual and intransferable to such an

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

extent that its influence upon the actual forms of Christianity is small out of all proportion to its importance for life. It does indeed express itself permanently in such precious forms as hymns and psalms of which many are songs of deliverance, as it expresses itself in sermons and other addresses, which have usually a more ephemeral existence. The poetical structure of hymns (and "psalm" is only another word for "hymn") which are rooted in individual experience, and have commended themselves to others, *i.e.*, socially, gives to that form of the expression of experience an opportunity of permanent existence which is rare in such attempts at self-expression.

It is this individuality of experience and the social nature of the forms of religion which account chiefly for the comparative insignificance of this element of direct self-expression in the history of the making of Christian forms. Nevertheless, even in forms this actual experience has a determining value ; it rarely originates forms, but it does sift, test, and verify them, just as in science verification follows hypothesis. The forms which have been created by the other elements spoken of must all face in some sense the bar of actual experience ; and, when experience has verified or substantiated these forms, their continued and experimentally approved existence has in it the element of self-expression, as surely as the more original elements. For forms cannot live long without an experimental basis of verification ; and, if it is aspiration or need which is usually the creative force in the production of forms, it is

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

experience which is for the most part the norm or test of truth and the secret of the survival of forms.

All genuine religious experience, however, tends to be told and repeated as good news, and sometimes at length to crystallise into forms ; especially, if the experience of one has led to the regeneration of others, is the common experience given a formal statement in word or outward form.

III

Now such formal embodiments of experience in religion express, as is natural, both the strength and the weakness of the human nature concerned. Christian forms generally are, at their foundations, a compound of mixed motives and mixed experiences, which reflect the mixed character behind them, even in the best of men or ages.

The caste of priests was created in the young Church of the Roman empire, not so much by the aggression of ecclesiastical ambition, as by the weakness of human nature which asked for spiritual props in the form of religious mediators between man and God. The fundamental question here is a difficult one, for we all need some kinds of priesthood in life ; we lean on others in matters where their knowledge is better than ours. Doctors are our medical priests, professors and teachers our educational priests, and clergymen almost inevitably our religious priests. The conception of authority and the habit of belief upon authority are essential to life, especially with modern specialisation ; and we

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

allow experts, in whom we have a reasonable faith, to dictate to us in many ways.

Of course, authority is not infallibility, nor is a reasonable deference the same thing as subject-tion ; but the accredited minister of religion in any community tends naturally to fall into the position of mediatorship or priesthood—I use the word “ priest ” without any connotation of sacrifice. How far this argument carries us is not clear ; it will carry different minds to different points ; but one thing is certain—the devolution of spiritual ministry upon a special class can never be made absolute without serious loss. It was fundamentally the weakness, lethargy, and lack of spiritual interest of the laity which made priestcraft and prelacy, not official ambition ; and one can only fear that similar factors to-day are tending to a similar degradation of the Church, especially in relation to theology. The rush of modern life and the fear of thinking profoundly are leading many to-day to take their theology at second-hand from those who, if authorised to teach by the Church, are in no way infallible ; business men are asking others to think for them, and acquiescence in the statements of Church or system is prized as though it were faith, or a substitute for it. This religion of the parasite must be nipped in the bud by men who have the courage to tell its followers that they are on the way to the everlasting bonfire, and that there are no substitutes for personal faith and sincerity of thought.

We may defer to authority in reasonable measure, both in sacred and secular matters,

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

but no priesthood can ever be acknowledged which limits or weakens the priesthood of all believers. Human nature longs to lean on something or someone, and it has to learn that the truest service of God is to lean on nothing and no one but Him, the Invisible, and that we must stand on our own feet in all our relations with man. Consulting for human weakness is not the way of God or of faith, the potential in man is really truer than the actual ; and the proleptic or anticipatory Christianity, which will not compromise its principles or demands, and which treats man as better than he is, and as capable of all the requirements of God in divine, not human, strength, is the victorious Christianity which has so often uplifted and illumined the past of our faith, in spite of all the weaknesses and failures of humanity and the Church.

IV

In the history of religion definite experience has always exercised a moulding influence on forms, institutional, practical and dogmatic ; I refer in particular to such experiences as deliverance from mental burdens, the sense of strain resolved and peace found, the possession of a new power and a new enthusiasm, or of a new standpoint (or readjustment of values), or, again, the facts of special providential interpositions in the moment of need. But the material which can be provided for investigation in this connection is, as I have said before, somewhat less than is commonly supposed, for facts of themselves avail little without

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

interpretation ; and interpretation, which is in religion a question of continuous experience and cumulative evidence, is something which is so personal and elusive as to be almost intransmissible and inexpressible in cogent or definite forms. Nor has experience ever found that measure of proof which turns faith to knowledge ; the life of faith cannot be left behind on this earth. We still seek for a sign from Heaven, but no sign is given, or shall be given, and we must fall back upon interpretation. Even where signs were given in the ministry of Christ, the Pharisees could still make for themselves another interpretation—"He doeth these works by Beelzebub," etc.—for the physical can never convince apart from the moral, and moral values in relation to physical facts are matters of faith and private interpretation. There is no escape from the responsibility of individual judgment, choice and action.

Yet to the teachable and sincere mind there have always been many things which could be written off, some large and some small, as clearly providential, and not as mere coincidences with man's need, things which prove as clearly as is necessary the love and care of God for His Kingdom or for the individual life. The story, again, of our own lives in relation to pain or sorrow, the realisation that all, or most, that has been unpleasant in them has been for good, a discipline from which we have learnt needed lessons ; and the more objective perception of the place and value of suffering in the lives of others, a value

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

which Aeschylus has expressed as the great secret of life in the phrase *πάθει μάθος*, and which rises at times in martyrdom, and above all on Calvary, to something with historical and spiritual significance for humanity—all these and other thoughts have given us a species of *terra firma* in experience, and we know the two ways, the way of death and the way of life ; we have come clearly to distinguish the one from the other, and it is by actual experience that we have learned to do so.

At times the providential interpretations of God have been so marked that they have left their imprint deep on individual or national life, and the conception of God held by individuals or peoples can in some cases be carried back to a great crisis and a great deliverance. It was so in the religion of the Hebrews. The dominating conceptions of God as omnipotent, and of Israel as divinely chosen and favoured, rested ultimately upon the tradition of a miraculous history. The deliverance from Egypt, in particular the plagues and the passage of the Red Sea, the story of the wanderings and of unexpected provision for the needs of the people, the fall of Jericho, the great victory over Sisera—these and other traditional accounts, resting, I think, upon historical facts as their only adequate explanation, created under the providence of God much of that conception of Yahweh which was the glory of the prophets ; and I venture to believe that the conceptions of the omnipotence of God and of the gospel of miracle (both alike meaning that our

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

resources are always greater than we know, and sufficient to all our true needs) are integral to the Christian faith, even if the doctrine of national election has largely passed from the foreground.

Thus the earlier forms of Israel's worship were in no small measure determined by history, and the later story of the same people demonstrates the same fact. Nothing, for example, so altered Hebrew forms of religious thought and worship as the destruction of the nation by the Chaldeans ; the survival of the Church as distinct from the nation created not only new forms of belief and worship, in particular the forms of the Law, the rabbi, the synagogue, and in the end apocalypse, but also new forms of piety. The mysticism of some of the Psalms is a long remove from the deism of most of the prophets, and in this section of the Hebrew Scriptures we have some of the most interesting documents of religious experience which history has given us. Many of the greater Psalms read as the records of actual experiences of deliverance from physical or mental terrors ; they are a clear testimony to the new individualistic element in Hebrew religion, which came to its own after the social unity of the nation had been disrupted, and which finds its first clear expression in the teaching of Ezekiel. The changes of this period in eschatology and angelology belong rather to a later chapter, so I pass them over at this point ; but enough has been said to show that social and individual forms in religion can be produced or changed by historical experiences.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

In religious forms, again, especially forms of belief, men tend to express, not only the past experienced, and the future looked for, but the present elements of their natures. The logical side of thought naturally tends to find such expression easily in words, but the intuitive and æsthetic elements in thought are also of vast importance, and are usually the deciding factors where issues are uncertain. Let us in this connection consider the Christian doctrine of God in relation to the theological apologetic which defends it.

The most valuable point in history at which to touch the subject is to be found in the great attempt of Immanuel Kant to put the whole discussion upon a different basis by subverting the older apologetic and supplying a new one. In his criticism of the three standard proofs for the existence of God, the cosmological, the teleological and the ontological, Kant believed he had refuted them all, only to add a fourth of his own, the moral proof, on a basis of practical reason, which in his eyes argued a moral order with power to accomplish moral obligations, so implying both a God as Moral Governor and immortality as man's necessary means for completing the moral obligations left incomplete in this life. But it was only logically that Kant refuted the three older arguments; and it is important to realise that their cogency is not ultimately logical, but is derived from the intuitive or æsthetic fact of experience that the mind

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

can only find rest in the idea of a primal cause of all causes, in the idea of a creative intelligence which shall account both for arrangement and purpose, and in the idea of God as one and perfect, since diversity and imperfection are neither of them satisfying to the mind as ultimate realities. The idea of God is more satisfying to the mind than a denial of it ; and the æsthetic perception of congruity, proportion, and harmony, which underlies and, in a sense, creates it, is something which we cannot sanely think apart from for long. The world may be a chaos, but we must think of it as a cosmos, with the intuitive assurance that we are right, and that the alternative, though not illogical, is absurd, and even logically is improbable.

What is, however, more remarkable is that Kant's own argument, though he does not realise it, rests on the same basis, inasmuch as the moral argument for a God starts from the idea of a fitness and congruity in things (*e.g.*, between the sense of obligation and its fulfilment, between the presence of a moral sense and an adequate cause), which logically can be disputed. Upon the same æsthetic ground, then, as his opponents, Kant himself stands ; nor can we, as sane men, think ourselves on to any other ground. Thus, in the idea of God, however stated or accounted for, we have an expression of human thought seeking to satisfy itself and find rest ; and there is no answer but that of faith to the questions—have we the right so to seek, and so to express ourselves ? have we made God in our own image ? The answer of faith is that we have not made

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

God in ^{our} image, but that He has made us in His, and that in going out to Him our thought is but returning to its source.

I should like at this point to make clear the issue by a quotation of some lines in which Rupert Brooke has parodied the religious anthropomorphism of man, in fashioning a God after his own form, by conceiving a similar activity of mind on the part of the fish of the stream :

Fish say they have their stream and pond,
But is there anything beyond ?
This life cannot be all, they swear,
For how unpleasant, if it were !
One may not doubt that, somehow, good
Shall come of water and of mud ;
And, sure, the reverent eye must see
A purpose in liquidity.
We darkly know, by faith we cry,
The future is not wholly dry.
Mud unto mud !—Death eddies near—
Not here the appointed End, not here,
But somewhere, beyond space and time,
Is wetter water, slimier slime,
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One
Who swam ere rivers were begun,
Immense, of fishy form and mind,
Squamous, omnipotent, and kind ;
And under that Almighty Fin,
The littlest fish may enter in.

And in that Heaven of all their wish,
There shall be no more land, say fish.

This passage is, no doubt, intended as a satire upon Christian forms and ways of thought, but it seems to me that it might easily be taken as a kind of apologetic for the faith. Have we the

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

right to conceive God in our own image? Yes! *if* He has made us in His. Logic cannot help us here, but man's intuitions of ultimate values all tend to rise above himself, and to find rational satisfaction only in this conception of faith. Moreover, anthropomorphic thinking about God is justified as necessary by the fact that the Unseen must be interpreted in terms of the seen; and, of the seen, humanity is the highest we know. Above all, if God be interpreted in terms of Jesus Christ, we have the best available interpretation, *i.e.*, in terms of the very highest known to us. Thus the intuitive belief in the kinship of man and ultimate being, presupposed in our judgments of value and even in our laws of thought, and the inevitable use of anthropomorphic forms of thought in religion as the highest category available, both, from different points of view, help to justify man from the charge of having made God in his own image, and, on the whole, support the contention of faith that the converse is true, *viz.*, that all our serious thinking is the working in us of a God who has made man in the divine image.

VI

I have dealt with the intuitive or æsthetic elements in man's thought of and belief in God, and I have attempted to show that at the foundation of all such thought is an *a priori* belief in proportion or fitness. I ought to make one point explicit in this connection. Proportion is an essential in human sanity. We all regard sanity as a chief good in life, but wherein does it consist

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

but in balance?—not in logic, but in a sense of proportion or fitness, both as regards the external or objective elements in life and the subjective psychological states which accompany the interaction of man and his environment. It is hardly too much to say that sanity is ultimately bound up with a world view of cosmos conceived in some such definite form as the belief in God.

It was extraordinarily interesting to me to note in this connection the admission of a present-day philosopher, writing in the sceptical interest, in the course of an article which I read about a year ago. In the article in question the writer makes the striking statement that, if this life could be prolonged to three or four times its present length, the present minorities of believers and madmen would increase each by three or four times their present number, and ultimately humanity would divide itself wholly between the two camps—believers and madmen. There was no attempt made, in spite of the writer's sympathy with the sceptical position, to show that it could maintain itself; he admitted openly that mental breakdown must be the end of scepticism, if the term of life were prolonged, while admitting that faith can maintain itself. There seems to be here a practical paradox in the writer's thinking, as though he said "truth is right but destructive of life's goods, error is wrong but it preserves life's goods, not only momentarily but ultimately." Now if sanity is one of life's great goods, and if faith makes for sanity, is not practical reason satisfied of its real truth? "Atheism is not

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

illogical, atheism is absurd," is Lotze's sound dictum, already quoted, and the view of the sceptic, that mental breakdown is the probable end of the quest for truth, is surely a mistake even on the ground of reasonableness, for it assumes that nature stultifies herself by decoying her fittest to death and giving health of body and mind to the unfit. The conception is only possible to an unpractical theorist; common sense will reject it, and common sense is sanity.

In such ways sanity is actually bound up at the last with faith; the ultimate choice is between chaos and cosmos, and it is only faith, with its intuitions of sanity, which leads man to choose aright; for cosmos is not logical, it is faith's interpretation or hypothesis of the nature of things, and, apart from intuition, is justified only by its works. The idea of God is thus not only self-completion but self-expression, the expression of those elements in man which lie deepest, and are least susceptible of analysis, but which are more urgent, and, if ignored, more dangerous, than any other parts of his complex psychological nature—the fundamental dominating ideas of ultimate unity, infinite perfection and the coherence and reasonableness of things, the teleological conception of purpose, the immediate knowledge that health of body and mind lie in peace, proportion and optimism, and the like—things which are the persistent basis of all sane and practical thinking.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

VII

In the preceding lecture I spoke of the place in religion of certain elements in experience which we may call needs or hungers of the personality, and how they have both framed and supported formal statements of the doctrine of the Christian salvation ; but we must not forget that these forms can be regarded as self-expression, inasmuch as these elements form part of past and present experience. It is not for us to spend further time on what has already received notice, but we must not overlook the facts that salvation is a practical thing tested in experience, and that, of the theories of salvation propounded in the past, only those have had any lengthened life which could bring forward experience, as well as aspiration and need, to support them. Theories that have worked rest on experience, and the element of experience therefore cannot be subtracted from these theories of Atonement and the like, at any stage in their development, since practical testing has always gone hand in hand with theory in theological development. From the beginning of the Christian salvation in Christ, or earlier still in the Old Testament, all attempts to formulate a way of salvation have rested primarily upon experience, upon a Gospel which is the story of something done, and not merely hoped for.

Thus self-expression as well as self-completion is an integral factor in the production of theories of Atonement, though it has reference more to their efficacy than to their form, which usually follows the realisation of needs. Experience

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

cannot be discounted as a factor in any serious doctrine of Atonement ; and above all in the less ethical theories it is present as that which overrides all ethical objection to their formulations—they have worked, therefore they are in some sense true, however difficult it may be to express them in full harmony with other points in the Christian system. Indeed it would probably be true to say that the less ethical the theory—and the remark applies in particular to certain forms of the substitutionary view—the more experimental and the more genuine the fact ; what does not rest easily upon the moral presuppositions of Christianity must rest all the more upon experience, or criticism would soon either destroy or radically alter the formula in question.

The vitality of many such theories rests primarily upon the fact that men have found some of life's highest goods by means of them ; to ignore this fact is futile, and it must be explained on the ground of the finitude of human thought. The more "moral" theories are often superficial, while the "immoral" are deeper ; the former are pleasing but powerless, the latter harder to understand but effective, not however as being immoral, but because we cannot yet synthesise the discordant elements in our experience. Needs and experience alike teach us humility in our criticisms of theology ; and surely reverence is becoming in discussing the paths worn by the feet of the saints, whether we approve of their outward appearance or no. Truth is a greater thing than our knowledge of it ; experience is a

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

surer test than the categories of our ethics, Christian or philosophical ; and in theology we are always face to face with ultimate rather than with logical values. We must look for life and prize it, rather than value its forms ; and doing so we shall learn to value many a form otherwise uncongenial, because it has been the vehicle and expression of true life. This question of self-expression, or the embodiment of experience, is, I think, fundamental to a just discussion of the question of the Atonement. Ultimately, no doubt, reason and experience will find their synthesis, but at present we must place experience above theory (or thought about experience) and keep abstract reason in its place of servant to life.

VIII

I have dealt with only a very few out of many forms of Christian belief, but what I have said of these few will embrace all others in measure ; for all serious religious thought springs either out of need or experience, and, speaking generally, its genesis is in need, and its verification in experience. The wish is often father to the thought, but the wish itself springs out of nature as ordered by a Divine intelligence, and, where purified and elevated by religion, it is always in measure prophetic of its own fulfilment. That fulfilment is known as reasonable long before it is known as logical, and it is in experience that it finds and passes the supreme test of life. Dogmas born of man's need can only live by experience,

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

and I think it is true to say that no dogma—no dogma relating to this life at least—has had any continued or corporate acceptance in the Church which has no proof from experimental fact.

Luther's need led him to search after a doctrine of justification by faith, and at last to formulate it; and, once formulated, it set him free. There we have need as the origin of doctrine, and verification in experience following upon it. But, had his formula of faith not freed himself in actual fact, it could never have become the foundation of a new statement of Christian truth, as it did. Its verification in his experience, and in the experience of his followers, was a *sine qua non* of its general acceptance in Protestantism, and of its vitality in the days which followed that great disruption of the old ecclesiastical system. Sometimes, indeed, beliefs may seem to spring straight out of experience rather than realisation of need, as in the case of St. Paul's conversion and evangelism, but only a shallow interpretation of the relevant passages can make us forget all that went before the crisis near Damascus, by way of the searching out and trying of various expedients. His need was very clearly known to himself, and Paul was realising along what lines deliverance must come; though that realisation at the last was more cataclysmic than in the case of most men.

Negative experience must precede positive, and the feeling of need precede attainment; and when, out of need, has been born a clear realisation of what ought to be true, the time is

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

come when the will can be enabled—perhaps by a text of Holy Writ, or a chance word uttered by some friend, or the deliberate speech of some Christian teacher, or a providential interference in life by vision or revelation all unlooked for—to put matters to the test, and, proving them, to stand firm in the faith thus won, and to help others to a like faith.

But, in all spiritual experience of revelation or power, both sides, the negative and the positive, are to be found, if we will but look for them. Only that faith can live, which bears upon the felt needs of the times, and is being continually verified in the current experience of Christian men and women—this point is, I think, worthy of emphasis in relation to present-day belief. The needs of men remain much the same in all generations, but the felt or realised needs differ, and it is to these primarily that the attention of the Church in every age must be given. Again, beliefs can be held for a time which find no experimental verification in life, but vigorous sincere minds always ask for their proofs and for the fruits of such a sowing ; and I think it is partly the failure of the Church to-day to verify its own evangelical faith in the peace and power which it undoubtedly gave in the past, that has caused the present eclipse of faith in its more definite forms. Definite experience always begets definite faith in its own age and environment, and if the Church had to-day more of the visible fruits of Christian faith, in a peace that passed understanding, and a power by which the world

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

was visibly turned upside down, there would be little serious cavil among sincere men as to its possession of some great and precious secret, such as won the Christian Church its place in the first three centuries.

Captious critics of course there always were, and will be, till life generally is born anew from above. The deeds of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, so clearly evidencing God's power to open minds, could be interpreted otherwise, where dominant wishes were against the acceptance of such a view. Herod's fear saw in them the renewed activity of the man he had slain, and the prejudices of the Pharisees saw in them the power of the demons ; for, as I have said earlier, facts mean little apart from interpretation. All Christian experience, indeed, comes under that canon, its proofs being cumulative rather than separately convincing, inasmuch as the sign is never given to unbelief.

If the Church to-day were sure of its experience and of its interpretation of life, the story of to-day would be different. As it is, we are sure of one thing—our need ; and if to need we are willing to add venture upon that hypothesis of faith, which was the secret of power in the days which are gone, and which our own inmost souls attest as worthiest and best, we shall find that verification will follow faith, and revival will follow verification. Need, faith, venture, verification, revival, that is the Divine order of the past, and it still stands. Experience is thus the one thing needed by the Church, and by the world.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

If we can say "I know" rather than "It is written," our own lives will spell a different message, and the world will awake to listen, since these are the words for which the ears of men are straining in all their realisation of need and degradation. The mental dispeace, the chaos of schemes born in darkened understandings, the failure of a universal religion to be, or even to teach, what it is by virtue of its historical basis, the strife of classes and interests, the shallowness of life's purposes—these and other elements in the world of to-day call for a renewed Christian faith, based on real need, and verified in actual experience.

IX

I turn now from this very inadequate discussion of some forms of Christian thought to the more concrete forms of institution and worship in the history of the Church. Man is a social animal, and the herd instinct has its direct bearing upon Christian forms in their development. Thought tends to be moulded, for an individual or a society, by the forms which exist already as the framework of life. The doctrines of Christianity, and perhaps chiefly the doctrine of a future life, which tends to be conceived of as this life in its best possible setting and development, reflect very largely in any age the forms which are the common assumptions of human thought in that age. It is hardly realised how much men assume in their thinking that it is directly borrowed from the society into which they were born. The feudal

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—I

theology of Anselm reflects the feudal institutions of his age ; the forensic theology of the Reformers reflects the legal interest of their times, when canon law was being revised or rejected ; the social emphasis of modern theology reflects its labour problems and economic or political interests.

Thus, to put it plainly, politics—or organised society—tend to provide the forms of religious thinking ; and both Christian thought and Christian institutions largely reflect in every age the political thought and political institutions of that age. But the breaking up of political, and the breaking up of religious forms, do not always coincide ; so that religion, the more conservative of the two aspects usually, owing to the weightier interests it is held to carry, is frequently anachronistic in its institutional life, as perpetuating forms long abandoned in the political sphere. The Middle Ages are gone, but they live on in the Church of the Middle Ages—the great Roman Communion ; the Reformation is gone and with the French and industrial revolutions there has since come a new political life and ideal, but the Reformation age lives on in Church politics and confessions which are only partially modified or shelved as yet. The Byzantine Empire, long dead politically, lived on in the Russian Church with its imperial head until 1916, and its future is as uncertain yet as that of the Russian revolution. Or, to go much further back, the theocratic ideal, and the various political adaptations of it, such as the rule of the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

priest-kings in Jerusalem or the Zealot programme of Judas of Galilee, reflect the political facts of the destruction of the Davidic house by the Chaldeans and the reduction of the national unity to a religious basis.

And all through the history of the Church we shall find the same interlinking of politics and religion. The political forms into which a community is born give the presuppositions of social life, and so tend to mould religious and ecclesiastical forms, above all in an age of reformation or transition, when religious thought is peculiarly impressionable ; and at times the converse is true, viz., that, in an age of political change, religious presuppositions in the matter of forms may mould the political world. In other words, if there be a period of change in the State, ecclesiastical presuppositions, if popular, get their chance : if there be a period of change in the Church, political presuppositions, if acceptable, exercise a moulding influence. Political forms, moreover, usually rest upon religious sanctions at bottom ; hence the action and interaction of these two aspects of life is natural.

I am, however, concerned primarily with religious forms, and I wish to point out at some length how the forms of the Church in any age tend to reflect in greater or lesser measure the political forms of the existing régime. To this subject I shall turn in detail in the succeeding lecture, in which I hope to continue and conclude the present discussion, dealing in particular with forms of Church government and of public worship.

Self-Expression or Self-Projection; the
Embodiment of Experience. Part II

SYNOPSIS :—I. The government of the primitive Christian Church and political presuppositions.—II. Later ecclesiastical polities ; Church and State.—III. The post-Reformation forms of constitution, and the question of Christian re-union.—IV. Self-expression in prayer and praise.—V. The Church's attitude to music : a historical review.—VI. Psalter and hymnaries as records of experience.—VII. Art an index to temperament ; the need of balance in religious development.—VIII. The danger of stereotyping experience ; reality essential to religion.

VI

Self-Expression or Self-Projection ; the Embodiment of Experience. Part II

IN the last lecture I spoke of the place of experience in religion, with particular emphasis upon the need of interpretation and the value of verification in all matters of faith. I referred at some length to the place of self-expression in various Christian forms, especially in the sphere of doctrine and belief, concerning which I need not detain the reader further at this stage ; and towards the close of the lecture I turned to the question of Christian institutions as embodying or illustrating the same motive of self-expression. In this connection I emphasized the importance, as a moulding influence in the making of Christian forms, of the political and social presuppositions in the thought of any age, presuppositions borrowed from the contemporary organisation of society and the State. In other words, men tend to express in Christian forms what they are already in their secular activities as political and social beings. To this subject I now turn in more detail, and I shall at once proceed to develop the thesis with which I concluded my last address, viz., that the forms of the Church in any age tend to reflect the political forms and interests of the social organism as it exists in that age.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

I

To begin with the beginnings of Christendom—the primitive Church developed for a while along two different lines in the matter of institutions, the Jewish and the Gentile. The earliest Christian Churches were predominantly Jewish, a kind of new Jewish denomination, indeed, they seemed for long, and they followed the forms of Jewish practice. Government in Israel had been, from time immemorial, by councils of elders ranging from the local village elders to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. The organisation, again, of Jewish religion after the exile, being inevitably on different lines from that of the earlier days, found its bond in the Law and its centre in the Synagogue, in which the Law was read and expounded. The synagogues, following the civil practice, were ruled by elders, *πρεσβυτέροι*—the political presupposition determining religious forms—and the early Christian congregations took over that form of government from Judaism; the first permanent office in the Christian Church of an institutional kind seems to have been the presbyterate. The later but larger Gentile communities had different presuppositions, and followed a different line of development, even in the early apostolic period. In a Gentile environment Christianity became a *collegium* or guild, a corporation united by common interests and ties and meeting for a common purpose, and as such it took over the forms of the Greek guilds controlled by bishops or overseers, *ἐπισκοποί*. The

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

office of deacon, *διακονός*, was later added in Gentile environments as that of bishop's assistant.

These two forms of government, the Jewish and the Greek, seem to have continued side by side for a time at least, but they could not fail to influence one another by reason of travel, correspondence, and the like. In the end a kind of compromise between the two systems was accepted, but we can only guess at what it was in its early days. Our records represent on the whole a later stage of development, but, even so, they give no agreed system, and doors have been left open for the apologists of all the Churches of later days. We cannot say whether "bishop" was ever regarded as an exact equivalent of "elder," or whether in the first days the eldership, the Jewish ministry, was regarded as equivalent to and inclusive of both bishops and deacons, the Gentile ministry. We never find deacons apart from bishops; we never find "elders and deacons" together as a phrase; never in this age do we find elders and bishops spoken of separately as distinct, and often we find the words used as practical, even if not exact, synonyms; there is no trace of the deacon in the early Jewish churches at Jerusalem or elsewhere; "the seven" of Acts vi are almost certainly not deacons at all, but elders, or the forerunners of elders, for the Hellenistic congregation in Jerusalem; a plurality not only of elders, but of bishops, is found in a single municipality—and the municipality is the basis of the early Christian congregation, which had no

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

church or single meeting-house, but probably a number of house-churches or cottage-meetings such as are spoken of in Paul's Epistles, and a great united open-air service for all, such as Pliny describes in his account of the Bithynian Christians.

We must simply admit our ignorance of the facts, and the unimportance, comparatively speaking, of such archæological investigations from the practical standpoint. Personally I think the account given above of the double development of the offices in question is the truest we can reach, *i.e.*, a Jewish and a Gentile development side by side, originally separate, and later blended and, quite probably, blended differently in different communities. All I am concerned to show here is the place of political and social presuppositions in the creation of early Christian institutions.

II

Passing on down the years we find the development of the ancient Catholic Church to follow almost exactly the political forms and divisions of the imperial model given in the government of the Roman Empire. The Church became an *imperium in imperio* with an almost exact parallel official development ; and the creation of a single pope or monarch, whether a delegate of God, or of the people, was almost a foregone conclusion, and on political grounds. The Eastern or Greek Church was led along the same political path, but in the opposite direction in reference to the

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

monarchy of the Church ; what the Roman Pontiff was able to claim in the West, owing to lack of rivals, no patriarch of the East could attain to; and the headship of the Church of Byzantium, and later of Russia, was vested in the Cæsar or Czar, who was the transcript of the old Roman Emperor as *pontifex maximus*.

In the English Reformation the King's supremacy followed the same political presuppositions, presuppositions formed gradually in the second and third centuries, and explicit from the days of Constantine and Theodosius ; and to this day, further, the English clergy appear in many respects as a kind of civil service. The Reformation in its more explicit form, the Presbyterian, based itself ostensibly upon the most obvious reading of Holy Writ as to the early ministry, but derived much of its actual driving force from the new social and democratic movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which rested upon a new conception of the equality of man, such as at last attained to publicity in the watchwords of the French Revolution—a re-publication, by the way, of the Christian democratic principle, which, in the early days, had made popes of slaves and saints of paupers. The Presbyterian polity, the abiding work of Calvin, by instinct an aristocrat, but by grace a pioneer of democracy, was carried to completion by John Knox, the strength of whose democratic principles is so clearly evidenced in his recorded conversations with Mary Stuart ; and Scotland and her children have been the backbone of the Anglo-Saxon

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

democracies. The polity that was given definite shape in Geneva, France and Scotland, has indeed been a real founder of the modern democratic constitutions, both in the Old World and the New—one of the few cases in which the Church has led the State in the matter of social forms.

In great periods of religious revival it has been possible for the Church to lead the State ; the legislation of Constantine demonstrates this fact, and even the programme of the League of Nations to-day rests finally upon a developing Christian conscience in the people of the world at large. But such periods are few ; usually, and tragically, the Church is found lagging behind political thought in its institutional forms, and following the line of least resistance in clinging to what is of general and historic acceptance. The subject of religious conservatism here comes into view ; and two things at least fall to be said. In the first place the importance of religion leads to an exceptional conservatism in religion, a clinging to supposed *terra firma*, the result both of fear and of prudence ; and, secondly, the main strength of conservatism has always been found among the unthinking masses, for it is the *vis inertiae*. The conservative side has often had its philosophical champions on particular issues, but its main strength is not in thought but in precedent.

This lagging of the Church behind the State is a deplorable thing. Individuals in the Church are often far ahead of secular developments ; but the Church, like the State, and even more than the State, tends to be governed by the dead

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

weight of the unthinking and unventuring multitude, in such measure that progress in forms can only be accomplished by their education. The Reformation, for example, was carried through by the education of the public in Germany and elsewhere, by means of pamphlets, public disputations and the like, who were thus carried along with the leaders. Such education is peculiarly difficult, and calls for exceptional men as reformers, men, usually, who are not too far in advance of their environment, and whose strength is in courage and practical wisdom even more than in ideals or knowledge or spirituality of mind. The State almost necessarily depends on its average citizen, even though the real power of democracy for good lies more in its opportunities of choosing great men as leaders than in its theoretical government of the people by the people ; and what is true of the State is true in very large measure of the Church, especially where popular control has been kept or won. Yet the Church as the representative of Jesus Christ cannot afford to live on the "average" plane of the State ; it needs leaders who are men of vision, of spiritual life and power, and it rarely gets them.

The parallelism of Church and State is an unfortunate fact in many ways, and yet almost inevitable, because man cannot change his nature in a moment as he passes in the house or the street from the plane of citizenship to that of Christian life and worship. But the fundamental question is—which shall dominate, State or

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Church? And, if the Church could but be conceived in something approaching its form and essence during the first three centuries, it would do again what it did then—conquer and dominate the secular aspects of life. Beneath the bribery of temporal power it fell a victim, and it has yet to regain its lost ground. But the dominance of Christianity in the State is certainly growing, and the days of hope are here once more, when we may have, not a temporal supremacy of State by Church authorities as tried in Rome, in Geneva, and elsewhere, but a vital permeation of the State in its actions and legislation by Christian ideals and forces. We must, however, be careful about the converse carrying into Christianity of our political and social presuppositions, and we must realise more clearly that Christianity in its true form stands as a perpetual challenge to many of these things, and that they cannot be assimilated by the Churches without loss.

III

The Protestant Reformation was a breaking up of fixed forms, though the new forms were not really manufactured *in vacuo*, nay, these new forms, based explicitly on earlier and purer types (or types believed to be so), were implicitly the out-working of a new social consciousness, which had found its historical roots in the breaking up of the feudal system since the days of the Crusades, and in the equality of man with man, preached so effectively by the levelling gospel of gunpowder. When the Reformation had passed, it left behind

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

it three Protestant types of polity—Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent, or oligarchical, socialistic and anarchistic, in the language of State theories. These have been progressively modified and approximated in various ways, but at the time they represented largely the differences of national temperament and of social circumstances. Where the “powers that be” threw in their lot on the whole with the new movement, the old régime tended to reappear, as in Germany, England or Scandinavia; where they were definite in their rejection of the new movement, they were themselves rejected, as in Switzerland, Holland, Scotland, and in all the “Reformed” lands proper, in which, as was natural, the Reformation, through its compulsory cleavage with the past, proceeded to greater lengths.

This fact has led to a strange position to-day in relation to the question of the continuity of forms, so keenly debated in relation to Christian re-union. Most of the bishops of England, like the famous Vicar of Bray, for one reason or another, found it no difficult matter to change their allegiance—and that, not once, but several times in rapid succession,—especially as royal and national aspirations formed the driving force of the Reformed movement in that country; and the result is an episcopal body claiming apostolic succession in virtue of its continued episcopate. In Scotland the bishops, like Scotsmen generally, more stiffnecked or uncompromising, refused to fall into line with the new movement; and the Church of the Scotch

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Reformation, deprived of bishops, had to form its own framework anew, and so has to-day no claim to apostolic succession by the continuity of episcopal ordination.

Surely it is the height of absurdity that the validity or invalidity of orders should hinge upon the question whether or no the bishops of Reformation times were loyal or disloyal to a repudiated system under which they had held office ; and that the only answer deemed satisfactory, by those who insist upon continuity as a primary essential, should be sought and found in the spiritual grace of ordination possessed by those English bishops, who, in their own words, believed that " these be not matters for burning," and who cared so little about the readjustment of their profession and their allegiance ! A doctrine of apostolical succession turning upon such a test is surely self-contradictory, in so far as it prizes, as specially spiritual, certain facts which rest upon an actual indifference to spiritual issues. I am not here charging the English bishops with exceptional immorality, for the English Reformation is a thing apart, and cannot be judged in company with the other movements of its day ; but at least the advantage in this contrast is rather with Scotland than England in the matter of definite principle, whether in its Roman or its Protestant relations.

But to carry the discussion a stage further: Scotland might have created a new episcopate as its new Church form, even apart from a valid continuity, if it had actually valued the form

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

per se. It did not do so ; and though, in Knox's "superintendents," and in Scotland's approach to episcopacy a generation later under English influence, we have the evidence that the form of episcopacy was not wholly vile in their eyes, yet the Scotch genius was not in harmony with a prelatical system ; and the English *faux pas* of attempting to force English forms upon Scotland only made surer what was clear enough in the actual Scotch temperament, and what had received definite statement in some of John Knox's democratic utterances. Episcopacy stood in those days for prelacy, and with prelacy reformed Scotland has had no sympathy. It is sometimes stated that Scotland would have accepted episcopacy had England not attempted to force the pace. I doubt it ; I think she would have stood by the Churches of Calvin, her spiritual father, and I think that episcopacy was not a true self-expression of the Scotch mind ; in any case episcopacy was not accepted, and the Presbyterian system has in its turn influenced and developed the national character which first found in it a suitable mode of institutional self-expression.

The three forms in question, episcopal, presbyterian and independent, all represent political forms as well as religious ; but in the case of the latter two, which were a break-away from tradition (though explicitly doing nothing more than combat one tradition with another, seemingly more Scriptural), we have political theory taking as its starting point the religious principles of the earliest Christian community, principles expressed

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

at the time as the priesthood of all believers and the right of an open Bible, or, in other words, the equality of men in the sight of God as His children, the immediate relations of the individual soul with Him, and the liberty of the individual conscience—the watchwords, more or less, of 1789 in France. Modern democracy thus rests in large part upon the New Testament Scriptures, which embody an ideal that is primarily religious rather than political ; and this ideal is the fundamental explanation of the non-episcopal politics of the Reformation, with their denial of the “spiritual estate,” and of all priestcraft or external control of the individual conscience (a denial which was, unfortunately, not wholly maintained in practice).

Behind the repudiation of the historic episcopate, lay, and lies, more than expediency ; and, while episcopacy may return even to the Reformed churches—and with my goodwill—it will never be permitted in a prelatical or undemocratic form ; nay, even in episcopal communions it is being shorn of its anti-popular aspects and powers. The new polity (for Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, or Independency, have always tended to become largely undistinguishable in practice) was the expression of a new Christian consciousness, or rather was the revival of a consciousness largely lost since the apostolic days, the consciousness which was found, for example, in the spiritual experiences of Luther and Calvin—of immediate and equal access to God for all men on the basis of their

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

common humanity ; a polity, moreover, peculiarly suited to the people of Northern Europe, among whom it took root, as a form agreeable to their temperament and ideals. This section of my lecture might be lengthened indefinitely by the study of such religious forms of organisation in detail ; but my time and space are limited, and all that I have been concerned to show is the place held by self-expression in the production of Christian institutions.

IV

Transferring our attention now to the forms of worship, let us think first of prayer. The fundamental instinct here is the need of self-expression, and in periods of crisis practically every man, who has not been sophisticated into a belief that he himself is the final and highest product of the universe to date, resorts to prayer either to a God whom he knows to exist, or to a God who, he thinks, may exist. Experience teaches us that it relieves our burden to give it expression, to share it either with the seen or the unseen. The feeling of powerlessness, of creaturehood, drives men in mortal weakness back upon the Almighty, the Creator, whether their faith in Him be at other times conscious or not, *i.e.*, man's fundamental instinct, when he feels overwhelmed, is not " to throw up the sponge " but to cry upon an unseen power. But for most men, in all ages, the employment of prayer has been greater than this emergency use ; and for many it has been, and is, a habit of life.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Theology, psychology, anthropology, and many other such systematised modes of thought, offer their own explanations of the practice of prayer, into which I am not called to go ; but one fact remains quite obvious, viz., that behind prayer, public or private, as a form of worship, lies the need for self-expression.

Associated with prayer in public worship is praise, which is a combination of verse and music. The verse part is, in most cases, merely another form of prayer—prayers of adoration, petition, thanksgiving, confession, intercession and the like, in the forms and diction of poetry—but the music constitutes a new element, and one which has given rise to a number of controversies, owing to its association with art and its apparent neutrality in the matter of religious meaning. Music may in many respects be the most intellectual of the arts, but Church music has, on the whole, been æsthetic and emotional in its primary emphasis and use. It is a valuable stimulant of the feelings, giving a kind of emotional reinforcement to the words to which it is set, especially when the mood depicted by the music—for music is mainly the expression of moods—is in harmony with the versified or rhythmic prayer which we call psalm or hymn. Mission work has proved the value of such emotional reinforcement in the bringing of the whole personality into line with the spirit of worship, or of aspiration after better things ; and the help of music is not to be despised in any religious work.

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

v

The treatment of music by the Church, in the history of public worship, has been very varied, ranging from its repudiation by the Society of Friends, through its Puritan and Eastern limitations of use, according to which such modes of musical expression as instrumental accompaniment or part-singing have been excluded with more or less rigour, to the strong and noble German chorales, and finally to its highest development in the great English church-music school with the full choral services of the English cathedrals.

Both as regards the philosophy of music in its psychological and ethical aspects, and as regards its history in the Christian Church, there are many matters over which one is tempted to linger ; but I confine myself to the relevant matter of self-expression. The use and place of music has very largely been determined by the æsthetic temperament and education of the communities which have, with so much local variety, made a larger or smaller use of it. The English and German Churches, domiciled in lands which ever gave music a high place, have always had a developed and worthy Church music ; the English and the German styles differ in themselves in ways which reflect national temperament, but both alike express purity, strength, dignity and the sense of worship. The old psalm-tunes, so well known to most of us, Scotch, English, French and German in origin, reflect much the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

same characteristics ; but the music of the rest of Christendom, with the exception of fragments of the old plainsong which have come down, especially in Catholic countries, from Mediæval or even earlier times, is on a much lower level of suitability to Church purposes, and, like modern mission music, is often indistinguishable from the most secular and sentimental types. The use of "catchy" secular music for worship by the Salvation Army can be paralleled from Mediæval times, and is only a standing witness to the Church's failure to attain to a true perception of the moral values of music, a testimony to a lack of æsthetic understanding in those who have created or used such musical forms of religious self-expression. Music is a great power for good, but education in music is still so low that only a small portion of Christendom has any developed sense of musical congruity.

A study of the attitude of the Church of the Reformation towards the question of music is a very illuminating one in its relations to my subject of self-expression. Germany was fortunate in having, in the person of Luther, a competent and enthusiastic musician, and in being itself thoroughly musical in feeling, with the result that the German church music became great, and of permanent value in its Protestant developments (I am not here concerned with the Catholic developments, which are, of course, related), producing, as its true children, such giants as Bach and Handel, men thoroughly imbued with the religious sense, and allowing it a natural

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

expression in musical form. In England and Scotland the Puritan movement led to a general abandonment of art in Church worship as a sinister, dangerous, and even evil thing ; and music was inevitably affected. Fortunately, however, psalms and hymns were mentioned in the New Testament, and therefore the Church, in harmony with its Scriptural principle, could not repudiate them easily—and such repudiation would have been the quite natural consequence of the general revolt of Protestantism against the arts, with which, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Rome had allied herself so completely—but at least instrumental music could only find the doubtful support of the Old Testament dispensation, and so was got rid of in most of the young Protestant communities.

This Puritan tendency lived on in Scotland in a very definite form for centuries, where we have the restriction of music in worship to the vocal rendering of authentic Scripture psalms (the much used word “psalm,” which implies the plucking of a stringed instrument, being a strange commentary upon this restriction) ; but in England the æsthetic demand was too deep-rooted to be lightly set aside, and Puritanism, hated for its dullness and gloom, was swept away with few to mourn it. The real fact is that England was incorrigibly musical, and Scotland was not ; and in measure the distinction still persists.

The Eastern Church has, all through the ages,

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

maintained, by sheer conservatism, the New Testament position of no organs or other instrumental accompaniment ; though the argument as regards organs is weak in the fact that organs had not then been invented ; and, as regards other musical instruments, the environment, the poverty, and the modes of worship of the early Church seem to have been unfavourable to such development. In the Swiss Reformation, however, the logical conclusion of the Protestant rejection of art—in the rather one-sided development by Protestantism of the intellectual aspects of religion—was reached and maintained for a time, and in some of the Swiss towns even the singing of the “ Psalms of David ” was regarded as incompatible with the true worship of God ; and in later days the Society of Friends more or less endorsed the same judgment.

But, speaking generally, those who craved temperamentally for music, insisted upon it, while those who cared little or nothing about it, neglected, and even anathematised, its use. It is certainly self-expression with which we are dealing primarily in these controversies, and it would be interesting to know how many of those who led the “ purity ” party in our own Irish Presbyterian controversies over praise and instrumental music were themselves positively musical by temperament. My own experience has been that musical temperaments have consistently urged musical forms upon the Church, in the interests both of their own self-expression in religion, and of the adornment of the doctrine

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

of Jesus Christ ; and that opposition has come from men for whom the world of music lies, for the most part, behind a closed door. But as surely as we have many types in our Churches, especially to-day owing to the contraction of the world by travel, foreign intercourse, and the enlarged internationalism of literature, art and thought generally, so surely should we in our services have the means for the self-expression of all in the highest and worthiest forms possible. Mission work, as I have mentioned, has proved the need, and shown the value, of emotional reinforcement even by forms comparatively unworthy ; and I think we need have no fear for the future of music, or any other of the great gifts of God, in the public or private worship of the Giver.

VI

Before I pass from this question of Church praise, I wish to point out what a treasure-house of religious experience we all possess in the psalms and hymns of our Church manuals of praise. The Old Testament Psalms, and the hymns of the ages, which have gone through a long process of selection and revision, represent very clearly the varied experiences of great or typical souls, and are a perpetual fount of refreshment and encouragement to those who follow after. As our experience grows in Christian things, we find that more and more of the psalms and hymns unlock their treasures. The Psalms—the hymn-book of the Jewish Temple—

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

and the hymns of the mediæval and modern Church contain many types of religious experience, upon many different levels ; and, in the course of our progress in the Christian life, we find often that we pass from the more superficial and obvious of comprehension, to an understanding, won in days of trial and revelation, of the deeper and more spiritual among these songs of the pilgrim saints—songs, too, which, at an earlier stage of our experience, have sometimes been regarded by us with indifference or even contempt. The variety of religious experience is a truth written clearly upon our Church praise ; and it is the deeper experiences which, in the better known hymns at least, have, on the whole, left most mark.

The theology of the hymns of any period is on the whole more conservative than the prose theology of the same period ; but this conservatism is common to all fixed forms of worship, especially to forms of a popular type and suitable to popular use. Nevertheless every generation, with a vital Christian experience of its own, writes its own hymns, reflecting its own peculiar hopes, aspirations and experience. Thus we see that a representative hymn book is a concise record of historical theology on its experimental and more popular side.

VII

I pass from music in particular to the sensuous or æsthetic element in religion generally, as an index, in its emphasis and proportion, to the personalities or temperaments lying behind it.

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

Architecture, sculpture, glass work, ornamentation, and so forth, are called for in measure by all Churches ; but beauty in these things is rarely, if ever, accidental. A church may be beautiful or ugly in its architecture, but, if beautiful, its beauty has almost certainly not come about by accident, but by the positive purpose of making a building worthy in its form of its great purpose. Where no attention is paid to the building, it is almost certainly ugly. The barn-like structures of earlier Scotch Presbyterianism were an indication of the lack of the æsthetic demand in those who erected them ; and on the border the Scotch and English churches, within a few miles of one another, offer us an instructive contrast.

It is true that it is possible to carry too far the emphasis upon the artistic form of buildings and their accessories, and to forget their practical purpose ; but, after all, beauty is not fundamentally a matter of money, but of proportion, and the lover of beauty will always secure some approximation to his ideal. Only a temperamental acquiescence in ugliness can ultimately account for an ugly church, for form is self-expression. It would, of course, be unfair to forget Nature's compensations, and how an æsthetic lack has usually been accompanied by high intellectual or practical enthusiasms ; but this in itself only palliates, it does not change, the position ; for the imperative of beauty, if not as clear as some others, is nevertheless real and growing in power. The Romance countries never adopted the partial or complete indifference of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Protestantism towards artistic forms ; the alliance between art and the Church continued there, and still persists, as we should expect in a religion depending so much upon symbolical and dramatic forms of Christian suggestion.

At bottom the difference in the Catholic and Protestant evaluation of forms can be carried back to pre-Christian times, and the æsthetic temperament of Southern Europe is due to the persistence in these parts of the old Mediterranean stock, with its high artistic ideals from immemorial times. Cretan, Mycenean, Pelasgian, Greek, Hellenistic, Italian and Spanish art, with its pre- and post-Renaissance developments, constitutes a long and unbroken line of artistic excellence in Southern Europe, quite distinct from the Northern and Teutonic interests, either intellectual or practical ; and the failure of Protestantism in Southern Europe is but a sign-post to this important fact of varying temperaments. The difference of forms testifies to a difference in the creative minds which have sought and made these forms as a medium of self-expression.

From the forms of public worship in particular I pass to a more general consideration of the matters we have been discussing. The first and most obvious remark I have to make is to repeat the statement that temperaments differ, and that the difference in the forms themselves, as employed in sectional groups, and in the value or emphasis placed upon forms, is a matter primarily of temperament. The more intellectualized life



Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

is, the less is the call for picture, symbol or illustration. German philosophy, in its abstract and almost mathematical choice and use of words, is typical of the character which underlies it, and which in measure underlies the Protestant Reformation fathered by Germany ; the reader of Kant for example, must be struck not only by the lack of illustration, example, metaphor—the lack of the concrete—but by the implied disregard of these ordinary essentials of our thought. There are exceptions to this ruling, especially among the idealists, who have always had a good deal of the poetic in temperament and in power of vision ; but, speaking generally, the exclusive development of intellectual values, and of an intellectual use of words, crushes out the æsthetic and the intuitive elements in self-expression ; and Protestantism largely illustrates this fact, both in its dogmatic and its æsthetic relations. One-sided development is suicidal ; the human reason is all too ready to develop its destructive tendencies, and to choke the faith which cannot give mathematical precision to its definitions of its most important and most indefinable things ; and the need of recognising that logic is but the servant of life and of personality is being forced upon the minds of men in this doubting and neurasthenic—because rationalistic—age.

But if intellectualism can crush out things of value, and even faith itself, a disproportionate æsthetic development can do the same thing. The symbolic, dramatic, and sensuous forms of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

religion are at the best only a husk, and may enclose no life at all ; for not only the intellectual, but even the moral, values of life can be destroyed in great measure by that over-emphasis on sensible signs and outward forms which we call formalism. Fixed forms tend to stagnation by jading the mind, and by the entire loss of the sense of surprise or novelty, and so of the feeling of reality, which always contains the element of surprise or novelty, *i.e.*, originality ; so that spiritual death, or a ghostly religious life, is too often the outcome of stereotyped religious means and modes of worship. But even the free forms of the anti-formalist can wreak a similar vengeance upon an inelastic life, if the emphasis is placed upon them rather than upon their inner meaning. The one lesson obvious to those who can read aright the history of forms is the need of balance in personality and in its harmonious development, a balance and harmony of all the faculties and interests of human life, each receiving the fullest possible development consistent with the harmony of the whole.

VIII

One further matter I wish to refer to before I close, viz., the spiritual danger to any Church of standardizing or stereotyping experience. Experience is life, and freedom and truth are essential to its natural and best development ; but, for various reasons, the experience of some has in the past been more or less stereotyped as a canon of true Christian life for all, sometimes indeed the

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

experience of a very few. But even if the experience of the many within the fold of the Church, rather than of the few, were stereotyped, we should still have the same unfortunate results in stagnation and hypocrisy ; for no life can be forced into the channels of another life without great loss, and, what is more, the experience of the many has never, in the past history of Christianity, been on so high a level as the experience of the noble few. The standardization, in particular, of types and methods of conversion has been singularly unfortunate, and it has led to a great deal of hypocrisy and self-deception among those who were not prepared to face either the hell of a future judgment, or the hell of a present ecclesiastical stigma, rather than be untrue to themselves. The experience of the best is not a safe guide in every respect even for the worst, once we admit the varieties of human nature ; and the variety of religious experience is but the corollary of the temperamental differences in men and women, so obvious to us all.

“To thine own self be true” is the safest maxim in all such matters. The God of Truth demands sincerity as a first condition of all spiritual progress ; Heaven cannot be won by pretence, not can the risks of Hell be increased by sincerity. Truth, sincerity, loyalty to the best we know, are greater things than conformation to a type which we admire but cannot reproduce genuinely in our own experience. The “stucco” variety of religious experience seems all too common ; and it is no compliment to the God

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

who implanted the sense of reality and the obligation of truth in the human soul. Such artificial conformation of experience is but one form of the selling of one's birthright for a mess of pottage. The desire for the commendation of others, and the thought that assurance of ultimate salvation is bound up with certain external forms or types of experience and conduct, are only snares out of which we must keep ourselves with all diligence. The priesthood of all believers means that no human soul nor human experience can ultimately stand between myself and my God. Better far to follow the truest and highest we know and commit all else unto God. Better to go without the camp, even if the camp be the organised Church, than to live a parasitic and nerveless life in the mere reflecting of others, and in attempting to force our personalities into their grooves.

The "testimony meeting" of some sects or sections of the Church provides us with another of these danger-points. It is so easy for a man to get into the habit of saying what he wishes to believe true, and wishes others to believe true of him, rather than what is true—especially in public is it so; yet to escape that danger one must, to provide a testimony at such a meeting, take the other risk of morbid self-analysis—no small one. Such meetings, moreover, foster a selfish conception of salvation, lead to unhealthy introspection, and often, through it, ultimately either to despair—as one fails to reproduce the expected results—or to hypocrisy—as one arti-

Self-Expression or Self-Projection—II

ficially works up a kind of experience, or its counterfeit, at the mandate of an unenlightened public opinion. Testimonies to the power and goodness of God are among the most helpful things of history in every age, but they depend for their real value upon their spontaneity ; they cannot be organised or produced to order at certain times and places, and attempts to have it so have not met with success. Testimony belongs to the sphere of "prophecy," and, like prophecy, it calls for an inspiration which man cannot command. It is a good thing, psychologically and practically, to get men and women, in their early days of Christian experience, to take a public stand for their new-found Christian faith, and so to make a definite breach with the old life ; but the forcing of religious life and testimony into fixed forms ends in disaster, and I believe that the day is not far off when freedom of religious experience will be granted to all men by the public opinion of an enlightened Christendom, and when sincerity will be prized for its own sake as one of the cardinal virtues.

We need, to save the Church for the future of a developing humanity—a humanity developing in its demand for reality, for liberty, and for practical goodness—we need to emphasize morality rather than dogma, freedom of thought, feeling and expression rather than uniformity of experience or statement, sincerity and truth rather than tradition or conformation to recognised, and even valued, past types. In a word, we must aim at unity, not uniformity ; and we must be content

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

to follow God's highway, rather than to go on trying the short-cuts of man, of which the history of all religion, and of Christianity in particular, is so full. There is no short-cut to the City of God, but there *are* many gates into the City ; and we must be content to seek an entrance there by our own gateway, and to allow others to find theirs. We may help others, but we must never dictate to them, for we have not the attribute of omniscience ; and the history of human thought is a story of the feebleness of human powers seen against a background of the greatness of human claims.

Self-expression in forms is an essential of life, as mind seeks to mould matter to its uses, and to refresh and develop itself thereby ; I have attempted to show the need of such self-expression, and the possibilities and dangers which belong to it in the life of man, and I have sought to point out that there are no substitutes for genuine first-hand experience and sincere self-expression.

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification;
the Instinct for Sacrifice

SYNOPSIS :—I. Asceticism and the condemnation of matter moral evil relative and psychic.—II. The instinct for sacrifice ; its universality ; theories of origin.—III. Self-discipline and the problem of moral evil ; Gnosticism and Theosophy.—IV. The rise of Christian asceticism ; renunciation and consecration, the two paths.—V. Christian ascetic forms, Mediæval and Protestant.—VI. The Christian Sunday ; fast or feast ?—VII. Sabbatarianism and social service ; the true asceticism.—VIII. The legalist ethic and the Christian ethic.—IX. Voluntary poverty ; the way of the Cross.

VII

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification ; the Instinct for Sacrifice

I

IN the lecture which follows I shall attempt a discussion of the instinct for self-denial or self-sacrifice as a factor in the production of Christian forms ; with which factor is associated the whole development of self-discipline, or asceticism, in the history of the Church. There are two distinct bases for this development. The first is the philosophical association of evil, both physical and moral, with matter as we know it. From this association there is no easy escape for sincere minds, though there is considerable difference between an absolute and a relative explanation of the experimental fact that, for the most part, moral temptations come through matter and the physical senses. Whether, with Paul, we speak of the flesh as lusting against the spirit, or, with the Greeks and Easterns, of the body as the tomb or prison-house of the soul, or, with modern evolutionists, of our brute ancestry with its entail of lower desires, the fact remains that our bodies present to our spirits the opportunities both of their degradation and of their strengthening, by the conflict which is forced upon us. The spirit must conform the flesh to its purposes,

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

or the flesh will lower the spirit to the bondage of material things. Experience in itself gives us no philosophy, but it shows us the interrelation of spirit and matter in the moral progress of man as a fundamental fact of our present existence. We may rejoice in the conflict, and in the opportunities of moral victory which the temptations of the flesh offer us, or we may deplore the association of our higher nature with fleshly lusts and temptations ; but we cannot escape from the problem, nor from the need of subjecting the lower to the higher, if we would rise in the moral scale.

Two philosophies here are open to us, viz., to recognise matter as neutral, or to recognise it as positively evil ; and a leaning to the latter, however mistaken, has characterised much of the history of religion. The recognition of, or refusal to recognise, a positive principle of evil, whether designated as " devil " or as " matter," or in some other way, is a fundamental controversy of religious ethics ; but the modern tendency is to make of moral evil a thing of relativity, based upon the attitude of the will towards what is lower or higher in the scale of moral values. That there should be a lower and a higher at all presupposes that in our good, at least, there is an absolute goal or standard, and that evil is measured by distance from that goal. Now in Christian Gnosticism, which, it is claimed, and not without reason, was largely borrowed from the East, the definition of evil is usually along such lines, though textbooks often

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

mislead their readers on this point. It is distance from the positive Good which constitutes evil, rather than the independent existence of a positive principle of Evil; and by sympathetic investigation we are led to see that dualism has rarely operated with a principle of Evil of an absolute kind and equal with the principle of Good. Even in Persian dualism the evil God is regarded as inferior in the last analysis to the good. Indian religion, again, is often regarded as committed to a view of matter as evil; but, on the one hand, Hindu pantheism can hardly sink below a neutrality of matter, and the Buddhistic formula, on the other, is that not matter, but desire, is the root of evil.

It is well that we should recognise that all the great religions, even when they seem to argue that matter is evil, are fundamentally concerned with it as a question of relativity, *i.e.*, they stand where Paul stood in his vision of the law of sin in his members, of the flesh lusting against the spirit of man and of God, and of the need of a mortification of the fleshly nature, "the old man" that now is. It is experience which has lain at the back of the ascetic principle, which is but an attempt of man to assert and prove his power over the flesh, with which for good and evil his present life is bound up. Self-denial is thus in one aspect a worship of God by sacrifice, and in another it is a means of moral progress by self-mastery under the dominant impulse of supreme ethical values. The experimentally evident association of evil with temptations latent or patent in our physical

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

natures has, however, led many serious minds to an over-emphasis upon ascetic practices, and upon an ascetic philosophy of life, which has denied the good of desire and treated it as wholly evil, even as the Buddha held to be true of the natural desires as a whole, and as various Christian bodies have held to be true of particular desires. For example, Monasticism, Puritanism, and the *index prohibitorius* are but aspects and samples of ascetic Christianity, and representative of a very widespread development. But note at this point, and very particularly, that to treat desire as evil, and the root of evil, is to find evil in the psychic and not in the material.

Modern psychology, however, concerned with the same problem, and interested likewise in the psychic primarily rather than in the material, has tended to reinstate desire as something positively good, and to show that evil consists in its misdirection, suppression, or indiscriminate indulgence. In other words, desire, which finds its objective by means of free discriminating direction by thought and will, is a good thing ; salvation, to be full and complete, must be by consecration of the whole personality, rather than by renunciation of parts of that whole. Renunciation and asceticism have their place, while that ideal of consecration is unattained, as remedies for morbid states ; but their place is relative and temporary, not ideal nor permanent. The final vision of Paul is that of a perfect redemption not only for our spirits but for our bodies, and for the universe, the " creature " at large, which groaneth

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

and travaileth in pain through being subjected to corruption, but subjected so in hope of the great day of adoption or manifestation, when the glorious liberty of the sons of God shall at last be realised. Renunciation and asceticism then, for the Christian man, so far as they have a place at all, are, in this life of ours, means and not ends, and represent temporary sacrifice for the sake of permanent gain.

II

The second basis for the embodiment of self-denial in Christian forms is the instinct for sacrifice, however explained, which is found in all religions, an instinct at bottom of the relation of self-sacrifice or self-limitation to true success, which has appeared both in repulsive and in attractive forms in almost every faith, and which is variously explained by the adherents of different scientific or philosophical standpoints. Sacrifice in some form is a universal fact of religious history, past and present ; it is found in every form of religion, from the taboos or human sacrifice of primitive cults to the Sabbath of Scotch Presbyterianism or our modern subscription lists. One reason why modern religion is so weak among us is that its power of sacrifice is small, *i.e.*, both its vision and its power of self-surrender have grown weak ; though I shall have occasion later to modify this judgment in some respects. The universality of sacrifice, whether in crude or more civilised forms, does not argue a universality of motive ; and, indeed, motives are hard to fix

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

upon with certainty, the instinct being clearer than its understanding. Institutional, utilitarian, disciplinarian, and many other theories are given to account for the practice of sacrifice, but, whether our enquiry be psychological or historical, the results are equally uncertain.

The comparative study of religion tends to the conviction that sacrifice has not one but many roots ; fetichism, animism, and totemism, for example, offer different explanations ; the sacrifices of the Old Testament, to take a particular well-known case, have an extraordinary variety of meanings and apparent motives, and altogether in this matter dogmatism is even less becoming than in most. But, speaking generally, two classes of view seem to emerge which we may call practical and ideal, or commercial and devotional, or utilitarian and intuitional.

In the first type fear predominates, and sacrifice is of the nature of a spell to compel the spirit world, or of a *quid pro quo* to bribe it. The Roman *do ut des* type of sacrifice illustrates this species admirably. In the second type the motive which predominates is not so easy to define, but it may be spoken of as worship, reverence, the sense of mystery, the sense of obligation, and so forth—but tending ever to an altruistic, as opposed to a wordly-wise, view of religious observances. Of course a self-disregarding ethic does not in practice exist ; and only ideally is this type of sacrifice such as I have depicted.

In practice the two types tend to converge,

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

e.g., a sacrifice of gratitude may have in it the *quid pro quo* idea, either as a prudential safeguard (the first class), or as a spontaneous thankfulness (the second class), or as both. The latter type of sacrifice sprang largely from the sense of human dependence, and in covenant or totem sacrifice, and even in cannibalism, evolved a utilitarianism of its own, the virtue of the sacrifice lying in its sacramental and mystic uniting of human and divine, by which the human was nourished and renewed by the divine essence, appropriated through the partaking of the common or sacramental meal—a view which was to reappear in measure in Christian forms. But the sacramental theory of sacrifice was ever a social one, and thus never tended to fall as low as the commercial type—still among us—can fall. But with the theory of sacrifice I do not propose to deal at length; I wish merely to note the universality of the instinct, and to deal with certain of its historical manifestations.

III

The sacrifice which springs from the need of self-discipline, a type common in Christian history, forms almost a class by itself, but its discussion belongs rather to the ethical philosophy of asceticism, with which I dealt earlier, than to the instinct of sacrifice as something which relates man with higher powers; for self-discipline is primarily a relating of a man with himself, *i.e.*, a relating of the higher with the lower elements in the one life, a surrendering of the body

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

to the surgical attentions of the spirit. This evaluation of the body and the material as the medium of temptation, and so the occasion of sin, while not wholly true, nevertheless so nearly represents actual experience that the tendency of serious thought has been to emphasize, and usually to over-emphasize, the connection between matter and moral evil. But it is one thing to have a practical ethic of self-control by mortification of morbid desire, and it is quite another thing to find the seat of the evil in the material garments of life. Moral evil is the work of unbalanced, uncontrolled and disproportionate desire, dominating where it ought at most to subserve ; and the modern psychological interpretation of experience is at least a great step towards a truer understanding of the problem.

Moreover, physical evil tends to be confused with moral, and in gnostic or theosophic interpretations of life such a confusion is common, which relates suffering to, and even equates suffering with, sin, in a way alien to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Modern Theosophy is a recrudescence of the Gnostic movement of the first Christian centuries (and, of course, earlier), and, while we must seek to understand and appropriate all that is of value from every quarter, the theosophic emphases upon mechanism rather than intelligence, upon exact physical reactions against moral actions, rather than upon forgiveness and grace, alike repel the mind that understands something of the gospel of Christ, and show the danger of a physical philosophy of evil. The

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

Christian faith regards suffering, not only as the reaction of a moral order against sin, but also as a means of becoming conformed to the image of Christ and of the unseen Father whose name is Love ; for the Cross is the inspiration of goodness even more than the judgment of evil. Christian thought believes in a redemption of the material, at present conformed to the uses of sin by the desires of man, to be the vestment of a redeemed universe. For, in the Christian system, a purpose of love is the thread binding all things together, material as well as psychic and spiritual ; and such a faith can never admit the existence of unnecessary suffering, nor a mechanistic view of the spiritual life of man. The doctrine of *Karma* has its counterpart in Christianity, but the two are poles asunder, because, in the case of the Christian faith, a loving God is presiding in person over every moment of the soul's development ; judgment is not mechanical but intelligent, and the function of oversight is not delegated to inferior powers by a God, *ex hypothesi* too great, but in fact too small, to attend to such matters.

The Colossian heresy is still with us, and is still powerful, both as diverting into speculative activities the ethical energies of man, and as substituting an elaborate mechanism or hierarchy for the one all-sovereign and personal God. Christian Science as well as Theosophy joins in the attack upon the Christian view of matter in relation to physical and moral evil, but it is hardly germane to my subject to discuss that question here, as it has little connection with either the philosophy or

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the practice of asceticism in history. It ought, however, to be remarked in passing that modern Theosophy makes a closer approximation to the Christian view of matter than the early Gnostic type ; and even that type, as I have tried earlier to show, does not posit matter as an evil principle in any but a relative sense. This fact in itself proves that philosophy in the sphere of religion is subordinate to experimental and ethical interests ; the chief concern of Christianity, of Theosophy, and even Gnosticism, is to explain the facts of experience, and to aid in the upward development of the soul.

The problem of moral evil has been most clearly stated, within the fold of Christianity, in the Calvinistic formula, according to which God ordains man's sin, but is not the author of it—the problem is there, but no solution ; nor can any satisfactory solution as yet be advanced, whether of the problem of sin, or of the problem of suffering, or of the problem of human freedom ; and there is surely still room for philosophical differences in the attempted statement of experience on these points, even though in any particular age one side may, ethically and spiritually, be more needed than another to balance the tendencies of the generation in question, *i.e.*, to correct its deviation from the line of the truth.

IV

Historians, in dealing with the rise of asceticism in the Church, usually emphasize the influence of the East and its dualism, but care is needed in

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

accepting this verdict. The East is—with the exception of Persia which influenced the Old Testament, and not the New directly—pantheistic rather than dualistic in philosophy ; and the dualism referred to is therefore, as shown above, only the practical dualism of relative values, which finds, in the spirit of man and its peculiar interests, something nearer to the divine in its truest form than is to be found in matter. This practical dualism is found in Paul with a minimum of Oriental influence, as an expression of experience, as a transcript of the struggle between the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh. The practical dualism of an age of persecution such as that of the early Church, which, like all such ages, was an age of puritanism and ascetic sympathies, inevitably tended to the deliberate mortification of the body (the body which must be made ready to face anything for the faith of its tenant), and to a practical philosophy of life which esteemed material and spiritual interests, so called, as naturally opposed.

It was not the tendency, but only the forms of its expression, which, naturally enough, were sometimes taken over, where found already in religious associations ; converts to Christianity, in particular, would tend to carry into Christianity the forms which they regarded as of greatest value and spirituality in their old faiths. The emphasis upon virginity, celibacy and abstinences of various kinds, which marks the Christianity of nearly all the early Church writers, was, in part at least, a carrying over into Christianity of pagan

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

rather than Christian ethics, the ethic of renunciation rather than that of consecration ; but even the epistles of Paul, which show us these things in an advanced stage within the first generation of Christians, exhibit a modified sympathy with them. I think it is true to say, indeed, that, till the coming of Christ, renunciation was regarded generally as the peculiar mark of genuine religion ; and in this matter the spirit of Christ has been very tardily appreciated by His followers.

Moreover, the early and mediæval ages of Christianity are full of a spirit of renunciation, which no doubt sometimes found its modes of expression outside Christianity and baptised them within the Church, but which still more frequently fashioned within Christianity the same forms, approximately, as were found without it, owing to the fact, which we must not overlook, that human nature, being much the same the world over, tends to similar forms of self-expression. Virginity, celibacy, monasticism, *may* be transcripts from the mystery cults, the Pythagoreans, Buddhism, and the like ; but, if so, this only drives us back on the question—Where did they come from in the earlier system ? *i.e.*, we only push the problem one stage farther back. The true answer, I think, is that they came from human nature, emphasizing the spiritual, condemning the sensual or material, and fashioning forms to express its values ; and this answer surely can explain the later equally with the earlier cases. I do not deny the carrying over into

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

Christian practice of many extra-Christian forms ; but I think the frequency of the process is overstated, and that what explains the pagan form may equally explain the similar Christian form, without the assumption of borrowing ; for what can happen once can happen twice. That the Christian form is later than the non-Christian form does not prove identity of origin—it proves only similarity of origin. Indeed, if we could find some new race of human beings, with their own religious developments, I venture to think that we should find forms of self-mortification among them almost precisely the same as history has shown us in the developments of Christianity. Even if we copy, our exemplar must rest on human nature.

The fundamental ethical question for Christianity, however, in this connection, is to decide whether renunciation really is the way or no ; and here the teaching of the life and spirit of Christ, who came eating and drinking, unlike the ascetic Baptist, seems to me to be that the true path is that of consecration. Renunciation has a surgical value for abnormal states—"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off," but consecration is the message Christ preaches, a consecration by surrender to God, which, in its denial of self, goes deeper than renunciation, for it gives up, or seeks to give up, not a part, but all. This consecration is also the ultimate vision and message of Paul in his ethic of freedom or sonship—"All things are yours," "Every creature of God is good, and to be received with thankfulness" ;

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

and it is the message of modern psychology, which regards suppression, however necessary in specific morbid cases, as ultimately wrong, and the true ideal as being the perfect fulfilment of desire under the guidance of moral and intellectual discrimination. Thus the Christian ethic and the ethic of modern psychology are both the confession of a reasonable faith that the powers God has given to man can be abused, but have a rightful use, and a real place in man's harmonious development, both social and individual. By the test of Christian ideals, then, asceticism is not the way of faith, but a philosophy that plays for safety, justified in abnormal morbid cases, as medicine or surgery are justified in life, but bearing no relation to a developed and ideal life. Asceticism is thus shorn of its glories as a mark of high religious standing, and becomes a mark of weakness, a confession of spiritual malady, necessary indeed upon occasion, but no ground of pride or of claims to a superior spirituality.

The enormous development of ascetic forms in early and Mediæval Christian life and system is obvious to all readers of history ; pleasures of the senses, the desires of mind and body, all furnished opportunities for self-denial, or self-mortification, and we have the long and unattractive list of the " good works " of the Christian life in these times, such as solitude, monastic and conventual vows, silence, celibacy, virginity, fastings, flagellations, pilgrimages, and penances of all des-

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

criptions, some justifiable in their context, but the majority a blind attempt to express in forms the instinct for self-sacrifice as the deepest call of the faith. The disciplinary or therapeutic value of such good works vanishes when they become systematic, *i.e.*, indulged, not in relation to particular weakness, but as in themselves good things, marks and means of true religion.

With the Protestant Reformation we pass into a new atmosphere. "Good works" are forgotten in the rediscovery of faith and freedom; and even good deeds are, theoretically at least, at a discount in the scholastic period which followed. The religious life of the Middle Ages had found its self-expression very largely in the system of self-mortification, and its ideal in the sainthood of the ascetic. Now I have no intention of denying "vocation" in the Roman Catholic sense; it seems to me to be justified by its highest fruits (*cf.* Dean Inge on the mystics, *The Pilgrim*, I. 1. p. 69); but this much must be said—the Mediæval "saint" or "religious" was usually a narrow, repellent type, and represents a poorly developed, poorly nourished form of Christian piety; and the passing of that ideal could be no great loss, if for it there could be substituted a better, as I venture to think there was—a sainthood of normal Christian life in life's natural environments, and of useful religious and social activity. But the passing of the older ideal meant also for Protestantism the passing of the means to its attainment, and therefore to the satisfaction of the instinct it embodied; and the whole

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

ascetic or renunciatory system of the Mediæval period was suddenly scrapped. But the instinct for self-denial could not be scrapped, and it reappeared, sometimes in curious forms, in the "good works" of Protestantism, which were, in particular, the keeping of the Sabbath, the routine use of private and family prayer, the frequent reading of the Scriptures, the regular attendance at public worship and other religious meetings, and the learning and comprehension of catechisms and confessions and of the substance of the faith in general.

Of these "good works," as developed especially in the Calvinistic communities, where Protestantism received its most logical and definite shape, the observance of the Lord's Day was the most characteristic. As in Judaism, so in Scotch Presbyterianism (its spiritual child for a time at least), the Sabbath was the prime feature of the whole institutional development; and into the Sabbath observance of the age was poured most of the energy for self-denial, which no longer has its Mediæval "ascetic" outlets. The Protestant apologists of the Sabbath seemed, and still seem, to ignore the fact that their Sabbath was a novelty in Christianity, a resuscitation after fifteen centuries of an Old Testament institution; and, of course, it was rested explicitly upon the fourth commandment of the Jewish Law, regarded as an integral part of the Christian moral code. The early Christian Church made no such identification; converted Jews kept both the Jewish Sabbath (Friday evening to Saturday

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

evening) and the Christian Lord's Day (Sunday); the Sabbath was a fast of the Law, the Lord's Day was the feast of the Resurrection.

VI

Into the historical and ethical questions connected with the matter, especially regarding the legislation of Constantine in ordaining a rest day for the Roman Empire in the fourth century, I do not propose to enter at length; but two things I wish to emphasize. The first is that our Christian Lord's Day is not, in spite of the mistake of Protestant theologians (to whom there were no varying levels of inspiration in our Bible, but one uniform platform of truth), the Jewish Sabbath, and Jesus Christ seems to have been in that matter quite definitely an anti-Sabbatarian; it is a day of rest and gladness, a day of refitting oneself in body and mind for the work of the week. It is not true that it is a sacred day, and the others secular, for all days are sacred; but it has a different function, and the only question is how that function may best be secured. Personal enjoyment and physical exercise, for example, are surely not of necessity evil on the Lord's Day, *if* they can subserve the purpose of the day, which is certainly not to worship God by idleness—for "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17)—but by making the best use of the day in its relation to the other six days and to life as a whole.

The second point which I would emphasize, or re-emphasize, is the fact that the instinct for self-

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

denial or sacrifice, denied many of its wonted forms of self-expression by the abolition of the penitential and ascetic system of the Mediæval Church, concentrated on a few forms of Puritanism (or the new asceticism) as pleasing to, and as man's obligatory worship of, God, and of these the observance of the Sabbath was chief ; upon it was lavished most of the devotion for renunciation of the extremer Protestant sects. The columns of our local newspapers have of late shown us how strong in certain quarters is this feeling even yet, viz., that weekday modes of spending the day are sinful, on the ground, not that they are harmful to man (for whom Christ assures us the Sabbath was made)—a sensible argument, if true—but that the day is a whole burnt-offering to God, and, as such, an essential part of Christian worship. It is true we have moved a long way from the days when shaving was interdicted on the "Sabbath," when it was forbidden that a hot dinner should be prepared, or that blinds should be drawn up as on other days ; the ascetic elements are fewer to-day, but they still exist, and there is, of course, much to be said both for and against these forms, which I do not wish here to touch upon. But one thing is obvious from the modern discussion—the social bearing of the institution is a chief concern.

Modern Protestantism generally is tending towards a social interpretation of Christianity, and assuredly not without the sanction of the Master who came preaching a Kingdom ; that is, our worship and self-denials, much as they are

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

decried by the adherents of former ways, are to-day tending to be more definitely useful in actual life. Social service and philanthropy are marks of modern Protestantism as they were marks of Mediæval Catholicism ; and institutions, it is realised to-day, are largely social things. A worship of God which has no social bearings is to-day suspect, and rightly so, as even the Old Testament prophets tried to point out in their day.

Let me quote you some very relevant verses from Isaiah lviii., 5-8 :

“ Is such the fast that I have chosen ? the day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily ; and thy righteousness shall go before thee ; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.”

What we offer to God we must offer in measure also to His children as members of the All, in whom we live and move and have our being. Hence the modern defence of the Sabbath will deal with its place and value in relation to the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

social development of mankind, religious, intellectual and physical. Its individual value and its value Godward will both find their best interpretation in its value for mankind at large—"for the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Self-denial or ascetic forms must bear a reasonable relation to the purposes of life; the fakir of India is a monstrosity, for useless sacrifice has been denounced by all the prophets from the beginning. The sacrifices of a reasonable soul should be reasonable, and "pure religion and undefiled" will always have its sacrifices, but they will usually be as reasonable and social in their immediate bearings as such religion was for the writer of the Epistle of James. The dictum of Christ Himself, quoted from the Old Testament, is, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Which is *our* Sabbath—mercy or sacrifice? Let us analyse our attitude to the Lord's Day, and let us make sure that a reasonable purpose of moral good, rather than an unreasoning instinct or prejudice for worship by sacrifice, determines both the apologetic for our Sabbath day and the form of the institution itself. It has its place in life, the day of rest and re-creation, but that place is Christian, not Jewish; not according to the Law, but according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of a free sonship and a perfected self-denial.

VII

This brings me to another point relevant to the discussion, the place of social service as a form of

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

Christian worship. Let me revert to the Westminster Assembly's definition of Sabbath observance as a starting point for our thought, and let us note some peculiarities in that statement of the ascetic principle as applied to the Lord's Day.

"The Sabbath is to be sanctified by *a holy resting all that day*, even from such worldly employments and *recreations* as are lawful on other days, and spending *the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship*, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of *necessity and mercy*."

Here we have a day of holy idleness, except in the realm of worship, understood in a narrow sense ; not only work but recreation is forbidden, on the ground, presumably, that it is secular, and so infringes the sacred or ascetic character of the day. The whole day without exception is to be governed by the thought, and devoted to the means, of worship ; and the clause beginning "except so much" implies that works of necessity and mercy are *not* part of the worship of God. Logically viewed, "works of necessity" are only an extreme case of "works of mercy," and the permitted performance of such actions appears here as a kind of modifying appendix, rather than as the essential canon of interpretation, which it is according to Christ's teaching. I think these things need to be said to-day by someone. "Mercy and not sacrifice" is Christ's rule of interpretation regarding both the Sabbath and the forms of worship generally, and judged by it the Westminster formula is Jewish, not Christian, in its origin and content ; and the real truth from

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the Christian standpoint seems to be that the best worship of God is that which we offer in "works of mercy," and that the Christian life cannot be divided into sacred and secular. There are differences of function in our days, not of spiritual value ; there are different forms of worship, but *all life* should be spent in "the public and private exercises of God's worship," properly understood.

Now the tendency of modern Christian development is in this direction, that is, to exalt social service at the expense of institutional forms, and "social service" I take to be another way of expressing "works of mercy." We often lament the passing of the old forms, but surely if the spirit remains the essential thing is conserved ; what is more, the new form may be better than the old ; and personally I believe that there is a definite connection between the decadence of Sabbath observance in the Church and the growth of social service. The energy of self-sacrifice, which our fathers put into the ascetic observance of the Lord's Day, is to-day largely thrown into the work of social and missionary enterprise, and thus is creating a more useful form of worship.

The Mediæval ascetic and penitential code had little social meaning, but it had a real disciplinary value in developing self-control ; the good works of the Reformation (like the whole teaching and policy of early Protestantism) had little social value, but they served enormously the development of individual religion ; the tendency of to-day is to emphasize social duty, and to seek the

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

individual development as a by-product of that activity.¹ And surely it is more in harmony with the spirit of Christ and His Gospel to seek God by self-forgiveness, in doing good to others, than even by self-discipline or self-development. All these elements belong to a perfect life, but the tendency of our day, in spite of all criticisms, is not wrong, but right, in throwing the energies of self-denial into the service of others and of the world at large. Active goodness ought not to be a good work seeking merit with God or man, but an expression of sincere and genuine religion. Read Leigh Hunt's sonnet *Abou ben Adhem*, and you have crystallised there the apologetic of the modern social consciousness, and of the modern social forms of religious activity. The ascetic impulse has become the practical impulse, as it is right it should ; and self-denial has to-day come in greater measure to its own in Christian ideals, for self-denial ought to be the denial *of* self in the service of God and man, and not the denial *to* self of certain things. The ascetic impulse, which produced the early and Mediæval Church system of "good works," and the Reformation form of a day sacred to idleness and pious thinking, has at last led men, in the spirit of Christ Himself, to a less self-regarding and a more active worship of God in the service of man.

Modern missionary and philanthropic enterprises are but examples of the same truth, that religion is being socialised in its forms and relations, and the Kingdom preached by Christ becoming more of a reality in the world in which we

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

live. The old forms, however, have not vanished, and they still have their place ; but the interpretation of ascetic practices, and of forms such as the Sabbath, must in future be along more social lines than in the past. The Sabbath that was "made for man" (not for God) must be conformed to his needs and uses ; and what that form shall ultimately be, must be hammered out between the opposing parties in the onward course of time. Ascetic practices of self-mortification and renunciation will also remain as therapeutic measures necessary to diseased conditions, but under the guidance of social values and needs for the most part. Our relation to God Himself is a social one, for God, the All, includes for us all the duties of life in relation to self, to others, and to principle ; and there can be no ultimate conflict between our duty to God and our duty to our neighbour.

VIII

The ascetic ethic is an ethic of weakness, an ethic born of fear ; and, while it has its place in our spiritual universe, it has no right to the forefront of religious thought. ~ Pharisaism, Puritanism and the like were great movements, which in their first days did a great and necessary work of amputation and correction ; but the artificial prolongation of such a régime beyond its appointed generation has always had the same results in deadness, legalism and hypocrisy. As movements they spring from morbid states, and

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

cannot without great danger be treated as normal things ; needful in a period of moral decadence and attempted reformation, they are fetters upon a period of vitality and aspiration, however uncomprehended, like our own day. Freedom at last, however, denies their rule, and they are swept away ; and the more urgent their supporters are, the more complete is the swing of the pendulum in the day of reaction ; and therefore it is the part of wise men, wedded to older forms, not so to press their personal tastes in matters of Christian self-expression as to lose all their power with their fellows, but rather to seek sympathetically to influence and modify radical movements by the wisdom of the past, so that the position of stable equilibrium, so necessary for consolidating the gains of progress, shall be reached as soon as may be.

The persistent urging of hoary forms is the perennial mark of the legalist, and legalism is still among us. It has its place in life, but it is only one of three constituent elements in religious experience ; the other two, the mystic and the rationalist, being no less necessary to a complete and balanced life. The three permanent types of religious character are actually these three—legalist, rationalist and mystic ; and it is emphasis which determines the classification in question, for all these elements exist in measure in each human consciousness. Thought, feeling, and will, all have their essential place in experience ; and a harmonious development of a full personality is the Christian ideal. Asceticism can only be a

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

temporary expedient in the life of the individual or of the Church, and it *always* involves loss, even though it may sometimes mean a compensating gain. But we have no right to glory in loss, in renunciation, in a forced enfeeblement of natural gifts ; rather let us deplore such things, even where necessary, and seek to make good our loss, when the time has come that we may. To exalt into a sacred duty for all time, and for all men, a therapeutic measure called for by the diseased condition of a generation, is sheer madness ; and such action bears a bitter fruit when its true season of usefulness is past.

The practice of asceticism in the past has been to lay stress upon things unpleasant, presumably as having an especial moral value in action. The moral philosophy of Kant tends in the same direction, and undoubtedly the principle, if I may call it so, has two great truths in it. In the first place, the best is not normally found along the line of least resistance ; and, secondly, the voluntary doing of the unpleasant has a *very* considerable value for self-mastery as a disciplinary measure. But, on the other hand, the highest Christian ethic cannot rest there ; law in time gives way to *grace*, and " the expulsive power of a new affection " is the true power in the Christian Evangel—a dominant passion for the good which chokes and destroys the evil even in the womb of desire. The psychology of this generation with its new emphasis upon the *wish*, and the true Augustinian theology with its older emphasis upon the service of God as perfect

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

freedom, unite in condemning the ascetic or puritan ethic as a life principle ; it is the principle of the Law, not that of the Gospel, and the full and harmonious development of personality cannot be found along the line of suppression, even though drastic repressions may be necessary in individual cases.

The Gospel stands indeed upon the foundation of the Law, self-mastery must precede self-development ; but the truest self-development is found along the line of self-denial and self-forgetfulness, under the divine power of a dominant passion for the will of God and the interests of His Kingdom. There is here no disparagement of the Law either in history or experience—in both it has its place—but, when the work of law in society, or in the soul, has been done sufficiently in God's sight, there ever comes the higher ethic and power of grace to complete the process. Law is a limitation of egotism, but grace is its abolition, the losing of self in the vision of the All. Self-denial in Christianity, as said earlier, means, not the denying of certain things to self, but the denying of self—*i.e.*, the word "self" is an accusative, not a dative, in its grammatical case—and the progressive revelation of the past in relation to sacrifice has correspondingly been from the external to the inward, from the possessions of self to the self. The offering of a son, a sheep, a portion of oil or grain, a pilgrimage, a flagellation, a Sabbath, or a missionary subscription, has often been a substitute for the offering of self ; yet only in the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

offering of self can the instinct for sacrifice in man find its fulfilment and its rest.

True humility, it has been well said by a recent writer, is not thinking little of oneself, it is not thinking of oneself at all ; and asceticism and sacrifice in the past, and even in the present, often stand rather for pride than humility. The greatest of the sons of men is the Son of God, because He emptied self and was servant of all, because He both preached and practised the true secret of the Kingdom of God, the selfless life. In contradistinction to the Baptist He was no ascetic ; " a glutton and a winebibber " was the description given of Him by those who looked for ascetic sainthood ; but what need was there of asceticism where God Himself dwelt without hindrance ? And He is our example, and His Gospel is ours in the fullest sense, if we have but the courage and the faith to take it to ourselves as a more sure word of prophecy than the thunders of Sinai past or present. The life of Christ, in a word, was not individualistic, but in the largest sense social ; and social living is the Kingdom of God. Thus devotion to the useful service of God and man is the true Christian asceticism, though it bear few of the traditional marks upon it, and attract a great deal less attention than its greatly honoured substitutes in ecclesiastical systems, ancient or modern.

IX

Turning to the modern need of self-denial in its practical bearings, let us remember that the

Self-Denial or Self-Mortification

first of Christ's beatitudes is given to the "poor in spirit," that is, to those possessed, not of poverty of spirit, but of the spirit of poverty, the spirit of those who do not seek first in life the securities of a substantial bank account and ample insurance policies, but who live their lives depending upon the providence of God, yet content withal. It is the spirit of courage and venture, of dependence and trust, which is the true spirit of poverty, the spirit which is nourished by small possessions in earthly things, and destroyed by the heaping up of riches; for the spirit of poverty is the spirit of faith. Poverty in itself has no spiritual value, for the poor man may be one of the rich in spirit, grasping and covetous of wealth, suspicious and afraid of the dispensations of God; but the spirit of poverty is the spirit of Jesus Christ, and is the self-expression of active faith and selfless love. And it is remarkable to note in history how often the movements and the generations of living faith have been driven to an expression of that faith in a voluntary poverty.

William James, in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," has given it as his conviction, after a survey of the relevant facts, that modern Protestantism will be forced, if it is to continue to have spiritual life within it at all, to adopt voluntary poverty in some definite form. The tendency of those interested in the social work of the Church has been to say the same thing; and not a few attempts are being made at present to regain and to nourish the spirit of poverty in

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Protestantism, as certain sections of Catholicism possessed or still possess it, and as the early Church practised it in measure for centuries, in obedience to the teaching and example of its Founder. The earlier attempts had their failures as well as their successes, and we have learnt something of the conditions of success from their history, both as regards economic and spiritual principles ; and it may be that one of the next great calls of faith will be in that direction. Are we prepared to listen to such a call ?

Let me say in conclusion, very briefly, that the Cross of Christ symbolises and sums up for His followers the Christian ethic of self-denial—it is obedience to the vision of God and His Kingdom even unto death, though it is, of course, also more, into which I am not called to enter at this point. The way of the Cross in all life, in all its departments and experiences, is the way of victory, and is the true fulfilment of that instinct for sacrifice in man which is prophetic of its own ultimate realisation, and of its own perfect triumph, through love, over all that is evil or discordant in the universe.

Extraneous Influences in the Creation of Christian Forms

SYNOPSIS :—I. Christian borrowings ; the *præparatio evangelica* ; the influence of environment.—II. The difficulty of determining how far forms are extraneous ; adoption or creation ?—III. Judaism and Christianity.—IV. Greek, Latin, Eastern, and Jewish influences.—V. The paganization of the early and mediæval Church.—VI. Reformation, post-Reformation and modern influences.—VII. Syncretism, comparative religion, and missions.—VIII. Philosophical prejudices and methods ; the doctrine of God in Christian theology.—IX. The relation of academic philosophy to the Christian faith.—X. The need of a universal Christianity ; the true Kingdom of God inclusive of all human good.

VIII

Extraneous Influences in the Creation of Christian Forms

I

IN the sum total of Christian forms there is a very large section, in beliefs, institutions and observances, which has been borrowed from earlier or contemporaneous religions or philosophies. Sometimes this borrowing is for good, and the forms in question are seen to be a kind of *praeparatio evangelica*, finding their truest fulfilment in the Christian faith ; in many cases, however, the borrowing represents a deterioration of the Christian system by assimilation to the things and ways of the world, or to lower levels of religious life. But such borrowing was, and is, practically inevitable in the history of a living faith ; a dead religion might indeed continue unchanged except for the slime of stagnation, but a living organism is assimilating from, and modifying itself in relation to, its environment all the time.

In the early centuries, above all, the centuries of rapid expansion, before a more Christian civilisation and an intellectual religious system had been hammered out as a kind of human container, this assimilation of extraneous modes and types of thought and practice was very

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

marked. Converts brought with them their forms of worship and social customs, or, if these were too far removed from the Christian ideal to transplant within the Church, they brought at least their forms of thought, and their moral and religious prejudices. Every age demonstrates the same fact, even our own, for paganism is not dead yet ; both in its noble and its uglier features it lives on, often in the outward apparel of Christianity ; and all conversion has in measure, even yet, the same bearing upon Christianity, *i.e.*, a tendency to make of it a compound of Christian life and principle, on the one side, and, on the other, of the social and individual prejudices of a civilisation, which at most is but tintured with Christianity. It is a remarkable thing, too, how the thought-currents of an age affect even the most determined of its opponents ; the Fourth Gospel, for example, is explicitly one of the most anti-gnostic writings in the New Testament, but it is also the most gnostic, so inevitable is this extraneous influence. No thought ever dominated Christianity like the thought of the person of Christ ; yet, dressed first in Jewish clothes, within a century it had changed them almost completely for the garments of the Hellenistic philosophy, with both loss and gain.

Thus extraneous influences are both for good and evil, and the wheat and the tares are so mingled in life that they must grow together till the judgment ; and that judgment is history—"Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht." Christianity is being continually leavened by influences and by new

Extraneous Influences

forms from without, and only the slow grinding of the mills of God through the centuries can determine whether the forms so interpolated are good or bad, *i.e.*, germane to the spirit of Christianity or a reversal of its principles. History is full of forms accepted by the Church and issuing in positive harm ; it is full, again, of forms which have adorned and strengthened the faith for a generation, or for centuries ; and it is full, yet again, of forms which, at first seemingly dangerous, were so modified by Christian use and principle that they became, in their modifications, a bulwark of the Church or of its Gospel.

I have spoken of forms which were examples of the *praeparatio evangelica*, and indeed it is hard to fix a limit to those which may so be described, for life and its expressions are so mixed that few forms are wholly good or wholly evil ; and most of those which have had vitality or grip sufficient to warrant their importation by converts or others into the Christian system, have had some spark of real value. The relation between wheat and chaff in such matters is very difficult to estimate, and seems, very often, little more than a matter of personal taste and inclination ; but history does provide us here and there with general judgments which appear valid. The Alexandrian fusion of Hebrew theology and Greek (Platonic and Stoic) philosophy into the Philonic system seems to have been such a *praeparatio evangelica*, mainly for good, but with its inevitable percentage of evil none the less ; the use of the Philonic categories, for

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

example in Christology, from the time of Paul, the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, and John, tended, when the words in question became, not an interpretation, but a description of the historical Christ, to an abstract Christological scheme, in which the nerve of the Gospel was almost cut through, and which was the root-cause of the Mediæval deadness in respect of this doctrine. Again the mystery religions of the apostolic age were in part a *præparatio evangelica*, and in part a most dangerous snare ; and, once more, it is hard to estimate the proportion of good and evil. From the time of Paul they underlie the sacramental system, and, for the Greek mind at least, eschatology and soteriology were enriched by them for a season.

One fact clearly emerges, I think, from the history of such external influences, viz., that environment is of primary importance in the statement of a faith. Christianity was quite apart from the faiths of its infant *entourage* in meaning and power ; nevertheless it must perforce use the forms of its environment, first Jewish and then Greek, or perish. A truly marvellous thing about Christianity is the fact that it has had the power of taking root in the soil of every age or environment, however diverse from that which preceded, and that its faith has been continually restated in new terms, with ever more gain than loss.

These historical forms of Christianity prove to us, by their use and abuse, that most forms have their rightful places and times, but that few forms (perhaps none) are for ever, and certainly very few are for any great length of time. They do

Extraneous Influences

their work in expressing the Christian life and faith, and then they die—somewhat reluctantly indeed—and the new wine of each new age calls for, and finds, new bottles, that it may be held safely. These extraneous forms, then, for the most part come and go, they make their contribution to the generation which pressed them into service, and by another generation they are cast forth again ; some, however, do succeed in leaving a permanent impress upon the organisation with which they have had this temporary contact.

II

How far the forms of historical Christianity are extraneous in origin, is a very difficult question to answer. The adoption of forms by Christianity is quite as evident a fact as their creation ; but some cautions are necessary at this point against the tendency of historians to derive Christian forms from non-Christian systems. In the first place, if we assert that a form has been adopted, not created, we only throw the problem a stage further back, for *at some time* it must have been created ; and thus its birth belongs to the history of religion, if not to the history of Christianity, and is none the less the outcome of the actual factors which I have been discussing, *i.e.*, the factors of human nature as it exists the world over. We are left then with the actual problem of creation still to solve, and upon much the same conditions as before.

In the second place there is a tendency on the part of some to assume that similarity of forms

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

implies identity of origin, whereas, as I said before, it only implies similarity of origin. To derive Christian monasticism from Buddhistic monasticism, for example, is surely less natural than to derive it from the same elements in human nature as created Buddhistic monasticism, *i.e.*, we may regard it as a spontaneous creation of a more or less constant human nature in both cases. Importation and adoption of extraneous forms are found in Christianity frequently enough, especially in the unsystematic and rather chaotic age of its beginnings ; but at a later stage, with a more closed system, forms tend to be produced from within rather than imported from without ; and Christianity should at least have the benefit of the doubt where origin is disputed. My concern, however, is not to divide Christian forms into the two classes of "adopted" and "created"—a very difficult task with countless possibilities of subjective misconception—but to demonstrate the fact of such adoption, and to point out the general lines of external influence upon formal Christianity. Any form existing in Christianity must at least have been created or evolved at some time, by some person or persons, as an expression of religious experience ; and, if it could be created once, it could, by the same factors, be created a number of times under the pressure of similar conditions and needs.

III

All through the ages, more or less, forms have been adopted from without, and especially in the

Extraneous Influences

early stage, before the Church had hammered out definite forms of belief, worship, and institutions. The Church, for example, had its roots in Judaism, both institutionally and doctrinally, for Christ and His apostles were Jews. Christian forms, indeed, can be analysed largely into Jewish and Hellenistic for the early age, and, for later ages, Latin, Teutonic, Oriental and so forth ; but even Judaism can be analysed into Babylonian, Syrian, Persian, Oriental and Greek elements, which explain much both in its theology and its practice. There is a continuity about all religious forms, as about all life, and the links between the different religions are greater and more frequent than is usually supposed. Judaism, for example, had a Babylonian cosmology, a Persian angelology, with Greek and Oriental elements both in its theology proper and in its eschatology ; while in itself it represented a lengthy development in the creation, adoption and scrapping of forms, as it passed through the Babylonian, Egyptian and Canaanite periods of its primitive history—from the nomadic life to the agricultural—the monarchical, exilic, and post-exilic prophetic ages, the Persian, Greek and Roman dominations, and the contemporaneous apocalyptic and rabbinical movements with all their Palestinian, Babylonian and Alexandrian varieties of type.

The separation of the spontaneous from the imported is far too difficult a problem to be undertaken seriously, but, at least, what is true of Judaism, with its small numbers and connections, is far truer of Christianity with its varied and

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

extensive dominion and activity. But, in its beginning at any rate, Christianity was itself Jewish, and so naturally were many of its forms ; and to this day a number of Jewish forms persist in Christianity, which are not really akin to its genius, and which it must shed before it can receive its truest statement in the terms of modern thought. Jewish eschatology, in particular, with its whole apparatus of the two ages and the great assize, with its programme of "the day of the Lord" and its topography of the unseen world, and with all its unresolved differences of view regarding the resurrection, the intermediate state, and the like, still holds the imagination, and, what is more serious, the theology, of the Church in its grip.

No one can deny that, symbolically interpreted, the ideas have a considerable value ; but as expressions of the Christian faith they are most inadequate and misleading. For example, they are full of such inconsistencies as the idea of two judgments—one at death assigning souls to Paradise or Tartarus, and another on the "day of the Lord," when souls are apparently restored to their bodies and judged over again—such being the implication even of the Westminster Confession of Faith in its last two chapters ; and, what is more, they fail to do real justice to the principles of the Christian faith, even as appreciated by the common man, and hence we have the modern revolt against the Church's teaching on "the last things." The impulse creative of the forms in question was primarily the desire

Extraneous Influences

of the Israelites to see God and His saints vindicated and triumphant in the great day of re-adjustment, when the nations that had oppressed Israel should themselves be judged and broken like a potter's vessel ; and no amount of spiritualisation can make that vision of the Day of Wrath a fitting expression of the Christian hope. Here we have one of many forms which belong to the husk, and not to the kernel, of Christian truth ; and we do not even need to-day to trouble ourselves very greatly about the destroying of that husk, for it is surely, if slowly, decaying before our eyes in this generation.

The Old Testament influence, again, is seen in later history in such things as the rise of a Levitical priesthood in the Church, as founded by Cyprian upon Jewish prototypes, the marriage law with its fixation of the prohibited degrees, the Reformed Sabbatisation of the first day of the week, and in a hundred other similar points of doctrine and usage ; and even the Christian Church was a transcript, in one sense, of the " congregation " of Israel, and in another of the Jewish synagogue. The influence of the Old Testament still maintains much in Christianity which otherwise would be questioned, and its wane to-day as a final authority is an opening door to a reform of our Christianity in many directions, that it may be more in harmony with the Gospel of Jesus Christ than with the Law which has held our institutions in its grip for so long.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

IV

Greek influence in the early days of the faith was chiefly found along the two lines of philosophy and popular religion. The Platonic-Stoic-Philonic basis of apostolic and post-apostolic doctrine has, for all its drawbacks, had a permanent value for a statement of the meaning of Christ ; and the mystery religions, in the sphere of the sacraments, of eschatology, and of soteriology, contributed much to Christianity that was valuable in vocabulary and ideas, as well as much that was valueless or harmful. Greek theology interpreted the Gospel along the lines of the Greek fear of death and craving for life and incorruption, both physical and moral ; Latin theology interpreted it along the lines of Roman law and the sense of sin or wrong-doing. For the Greeks, Christ was Prophet and Re-creator ; for the Latins He was Priest and Expiator ; and these differences represent at bottom extraneous or pre-Christian points of view imported into the young faith.

The Eastern and Syrian influences found in Gnosticism, asceticism, and Manicheism are rather more disputed, though the elements of such influences upon Christian forms are undoubtedly present in measure. One can, for example, say with truth that Augustine never ceased to be a Manichean, even in his most anti-Manichean days, and that, through his influence, an Oriental view of the evil in human nature, not in harmony with the principles of

Extraneous Influences

Christ—in its emphasis at least—perpetuated itself in Christianity, to receive a fresh sanction at the hands of some of the great Reformers. The “*massa perditionis*” conception of the Bishop of Hippo finds a clear statement in the Westminster Confession, Chapter VI, and the most we can say of it is that it stands for undoubted elements in experience, but that the modern conceptions of evolution and relativity have changed the problem for our age, and made us realise that, in such teaching, we have a statement of only one side of the actual complex fact of human nature as revealed in and through Christ.

I have spoken of Jewish influence upon Christianity as the most powerful in the early stages of Christian development, and few realise how far-reaching it has been both for good and evil. It was in Israel that God prepared the way of Christ, but “Judaism,” for us, represents rather the later legalistic age, which lived on its past, than the earlier prophetic period which is Israel’s glory. John the Baptist and Christ were the fulfilment of prophecy in its truest sense, and in this aspect the religion of Israel is God’s stepping-stone to the Christian revelation ; but, on the other hand, the Jewish system, in which the first Christians had been nurtured, early reproduced its defects within the Christian community, and but for Stephen and Paul might have strangled the young Church. The test of circumcision was abolished after a stern fight, and the Church sat more freely towards the Law after the life-work of Paul and the destruction of

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Jerusalem ; it became, not a Jewish 'sect, as originally it seemed, but a universal Church in basis, and even largely already in fact. Nevertheless the early Church held to many a Jewish dogma and form alien to the true principles of Christ, which only long ages were to root out. Such forms, for example, as rabbinic verbal inerrancy, and allegorical exegesis, and the like, along with the eschatological borrowings mentioned earlier, were characteristic Jewish elements incorporated within the new faith for centuries to come.

v

The period of the first century and a half in Christian history was a period of great assimilation of forms from the external and intellectual environments of the Church. The process was then retarded for a time by the conservative influences of persecution, but with the accession of Constantine it once more began apace, and hardly slackened till the conversion of Europe had been accomplished, and the Schoolmen had given definite dogmatic form to the new semi-Christian civilisation of the middle ages. The multitudinism which affected the purity of the Church from the time of Constantine, when Christian profession received at first imperial, and soon after social, favour, meant a great influx of extraneous forms, imported by the masses who flocked into the fold from paganism, bringing with them their prejudices and religious customs more or less unmodified. The "con-

Extraneous Influences

version" of whole nations by edict, or through apathy, tended to accentuate this process of the paganisation of Christianity, by which non-Christian forms were baptised into the use of the Church, sometimes by a neglect to keep pure the faith as handed down, sometimes by a deliberate accommodation of the Church to the prejudices of the communities in question, such as was recommended in relation to Britain by Pope Gregory I.

Of course such assimilation of forms is found in every age, but the Mediæval pace of such assimilation was faster than is found elsewhere in the history of the Church. Those who wish a concise statement of the process can hardly do better than read that most interesting seventy-fourth chapter of Charles Reade's great Mediæval novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth*; even if details be at times amiss, the general picture is a true and emphatic reminder of the Mediæval Church's wholesale assimilation of forms from without. Into this matter I shall not go in detail; Charles Reade has let his enthusiastic humanist do it better and more pointedly, if more dogmatically, than I could; but the study of such a development as the outworking of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth in the progressive enhancement of the cult of Mary, who for Western Catholicism has become the symbol of the "ewig weibliche" of Goethe, will illustrate clearly enough the lines of such a process. But for the Reformation, the cult of Anna, the mother of Mary, bade fair to follow somewhat the same course.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

The case of Ireland is peculiarly interesting to an Irish audience. To this day there is in Ireland a blend of Christian truth, dogma, and forms, with pre-Christian superstitions, ways, and associations. The "holed crosses" of the west, for example, are pre-Christian forms, for the worship of the sun in all probability, but they are nevertheless to-day called "crosses," though they have not that shape, simply because Christianity appropriated them and used them as sacred things, associating them with its own ways of worship. Superstitions and charms were also taken over in Ireland, as elsewhere, by an ignorant age, in defiance of the New Testament to which only the learned had access.

What happened ages ago in this land is to-day happening almost inevitably upon the mission field; in South America shrines of heathen deities are still being transformed into Christian grottoes or shrines of "Our Lady"; and all mission work is faced, in obvious or subtle ways, by the temptation to adopt pre-Christian forms, though Protestant workers do not encourage their acceptance to the same extent as those of some other communions. But many even of our own forms have a definitely pagan origin, *e.g.*, the marriage veil and ring, the date of Christmas, the name "Easter," the Easter egg, and the like—unimportant in themselves, but interesting as showing the element of pagan forms even in a Protestant civilisation.

Extraneous Influences

VI

I turn from Mediæval to Reformation Christianity, and here we find extraneous influence chiefly in social or political shape. The nationalist movements in England, France and Germany in particular, anti-Italian primarily in objective, helped to create the national Churches of the post-Reformation period, especially when combined with a "divine right" conception of civil rule as the almost inevitable substitute for the divine right of the papacy to temporal power. The new interest, again, in law, due to the waning of feudalism, the corruption and abuse of ecclesiastical canon law (which, however, had never in these countries completely dominated the old national and civic legislation), and the rise of a new system of civil and international law ; the growth in power and prosperity of self-governing democratic communities like the great cities with their free burghers, the expansion of the spirit of democracy to the poor generally, and especially to the tenants of titled landlords, who were fettered by many an iniquitous prerogative of nobility from feudal days, issuing as it did in popular risings and agitation even prior to the emergence of Luther—all tended to stamp upon Protestantism political features which arose, not out of Christianity, but out of ancient national and individual wrongs, or present national and individual liberties ; and the course and forms of Protestantism were largely determined in the various countries by varying political and economic facts.

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

In Germany the Reformation allied itself with the princes, in Switzerland with the burghers, in England with the royal power, and so forth ; and in almost every country the ecclesiastical forms of the Protestant Church or Churches, which were born in the sixteenth century, were moulded to a large extent, not by religious principles or needs, but by political and social conditions, antecedent, actually or potentially, to the emergence of the religious questions of the time. The early Roman Church was largely moulded by its imperial environment, and the age of the Reformation shows the same process in a more varied light. The constitutions of the Reformation have lasted with little explicit modification to the present day, and thus the political influences of the fourteenth and later centuries still manifest their presence in our Christian forms.

But the Church has suffered still other influences since the days of the Westminster Assembly or the Peace of Westphalia ; the French and other political revolutions, the industrial revolution, the rise of Labour and socialistic theory, all have had their influence in moulding the Christianity of the new age ; but to-day perhaps the greatest influence for change in forms is the impact upon our thinking of comparative religion, and an appreciation never before gained—not even in the days of the apologists of the second and third centuries—of the spiritual meaning and value of other faiths.

Extraneous Influences

VII

The position of the Church to-day in encountering the great wave of gnostic or theosophical influence, *i.e.*, of syncretism in religion, corresponds to the position of the Church in the first and second centuries of her being. The influence of such systems and ideas is for good and evil alike ; and the great vital movements of Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritualism, and so forth, testify to a new and living religious spirit, seeking after God, and dissatisfied with the crystallised and inadequate forms in which it has been nurtured. These movements are not purely speculative—they are doing positive good, making better, stronger and wiser men and women ; and the Church is feeling the challenge which God has sent her, and, on the whole, is endeavouring to set her house in better order, and to appropriate more of the truth from whatever quarter it may come to her. Her progress is still slow, but it is quite perceptible ; and its very slowness is at least a guarantee that what is being accepted has been tested and proved worthy of acceptance. The assimilation of forms born out of social movements is another feature of our time ; new methods are being tried of church work, of credal statement, of common worship, and the like. But, after all, these movements, religious and social, cannot be easily separated from definitely Christian forces as originating them ; they are, to a large extent, the result of the spirit of Christ, shed abroad through

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

the society which is grouped about the Christian Church.

Theosophy, more than the others, is an Oriental thing, quite as much as Christian, in its basis ; but it is notable that it is Christianity which has breathed new life into the religions of India, and stirred them to a new effort, first at self-defence, and then at proselytism. It is the challenge of Christianity which lies behind the new vitality of these other faiths ; and this very vitality is largely due to their borrowings from Christianity. It is but the story of Julian's paganism over again, and the issue will, I think, be the same ; Christianity shall conquer, but, in conquering, it will appropriate some things which it has not yet appropriated, to enrich its own faith. There are elements of truth in all serious religion ; and the progress of Christianity in the past as a universal religion has in measure been marked by a readiness on its part, as a living organism, to appropriate whatever was true and valuable in the different communities it evangelised. And that appropriation must still continue, for each family of earth has its own spark from the central fire, its own contribution to make to the universal expression of a universal faith. As Bernard Lucas, himself a missionary in the East, has written in his well-known book, *The Faith of a Christian* :—

“ In the Church there are still bonds which need to be unloosed, and ties which need to be formed, before the Kingdom of Heaven, as described by Christ, can be fully realised. There are whole

Extraneous Influences

provinces of the Kingdom of Heaven which the Church has not even unlocked, and a wealth of treasure into possession of which it has never yet entered.

“The wise men from the East have yet to bring their gold, and frankincense, and myrrh into the Church’s treasury, but before they can do so the Church must enable them to see His star in the East. There are depths of meaning in the teaching of Christ which the Church has not yet been able to fathom. Its mind is not yet keen enough, because its heart is not yet broad enough. It cannot yet enter into the full meaning of divine sonship, because it has not yet learned the full meaning of human brotherhood. The family possessions cannot yet be distributed, because all the members have not yet been discovered.”

The impact of comparative religion to-day is really nothing but the correlative of missionary work ; the missionary work of Paul modified and deepened his evangel, and so must it be to-day. Assimilation by Christianity of the good in all the workings of God’s spirit upon the family of man is essential, as a condition, to the assimilation by Christianity of the communities in question themselves. To speak of our Christianity as perfect in substance and expression, and to attempt so to force it down the throats of all men in our Western form, is sheer spiritual pride and obstinacy ; and it is not the proud, but the meek, who shall inherit the earth. The Church of Christ has not reached the end of its days of instruction and discovery ; and it must ever seek to reproduce the spirit of Him who could find in a Roman centurion, or a Syro-

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

Phœnician woman, a faith which He had not found in Israel, and who spoke of bringing forth, in the service of the Kingdom, things both old and new. External influences in every age are for both good and evil, and we are called to a wise discrimination, as trustees of the divine power and message.

VIII

Philosophical prejudices, again, have in every age affected Christian thought, and not infrequently for evil, for the methods of reason and of faith seem at times hard to reconcile. The philosopher often appears to regard logic as a master, where the Christian values it only as a servant. It is in itself a divine gift, one of the greatest given to man, but its limitations, which become very obvious when one turns from philosophy to life, from theory to practice, are often ignored by a philosophy which, by habitual looking at one thing, has come to see nothing else. I am not here finding any fault with philosophy in itself; in every age God raises up men and systems to do the needed work of criticism and of improving our mental tools; but even in the realms of philosophy or science, when men come to grips with practical problems, faith, even though it be here called "hypothesis," is the one factor which cannot be ignored, and all the great philosophers or scientists, who have produced positive systems, have had a large measure of positive religious faith. Now I do not raise these questions for the

Extraneous Influences

sake of discussing the values or shortcomings of pure philosophy, but to point out how often philosophical prejudices and limitations have been carried into Christian thinking, both for good and evil. The real trouble is that philosophy calls for definition, and to define the infinite, as theology is called to do, even though necessary in measure for thinking at all, means loss, inadequacy, and narrowness of meaning and content, and so of power.

In the earliest years of Christianity, philosophy played a great part in the statement of the new faith, but the emphasis in theology was still upon religion, not philosophy ; however, as culture was swept more and more into the Church, the abstract and philosophical element grew, till in theology it almost ousted the practical religious interests which originally it had come to support. In the age of the Schoolmen the tendency to philosophical abstraction and intellectual emphasis reached its height, only to prove its own religious aridity, and so to issue in reformation and the reversion to simpler ways and values. The prejudices which thus wormed their way for evil into Christianity, and which even the Reformation was powerless to cast out in anything like full measure, were chiefly prejudices as to methods of thought, which emphasized the abstract and logical as against the concrete and experimental in life, and laid a disproportionate stress upon those things which men believed that they comprehended, in comparison with those things which are immediately, not

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

logically, known, such as moral and spiritual values.

It is, above all, in its methods of definition, when applied to ideas and ideals infinite in quality, and therefore eluding definition, or suffering it only at great cost, that philosophy, coming as an extraneous influence into Christianity (for it is a pre-Christian phenomenon, and has not radically changed its nature since the days of Aristotle), has done most obvious harm in Christian thinking. Take, for example, the doctrine of God. Philosophical prejudice leads to a definition of God in terms of abstraction, *i.e.*, abstracting from the idea those things which belong to concrete human experience, such as feelings, limitations, and in the end personality itself ; and of the resultant definition our Westminster Confession gives a typical example in Chapter II :—

“ There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory ; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin ; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

“ God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself ; and is alone in and unto himself

Extraneous Influences

all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory, in, by, unto, and upon them ; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things ; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth."

In part the definition represents an attenuated Christianity ; but it is a long way from a description of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to note how, as the definition of God by the Westminster Divines diminishes in length from Confession to Larger Catechism, and from Larger to Shorter, it is the philosophical attributes which maintain their place most firmly, and the distinctively Christian which disappear. The first change omits the words " most loving," the second omits " merciful, gracious and long-suffering," thus showing the abstract and anti-Christian tendencies of a theology founded upon pure philosophy, and acknowledging it as master rather than as servant. God, in theology, generally tends to be defined, in contrast to our limitations of nature, relation, place, time, knowledge, power and so forth, as a being who is infinite, absolute, omnipresent, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and the like—these words all being negatives of what is known to us experimentally ; and the Church has been " bluffed," by the philosophical prejudices of theologians, into accepting this negative definition to such an extent that, as shown above, the

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

first words its representatives are willing to drop. in abbreviating a definition of God, are those which have reference to positive moral qualities.

This method of definition of the Most High by exhaustion and exclusion, proceeding upon the false assumption that "human" and "divine" are opposed categories rather than akin, is the root of a barren theology, and it can as ill afford, as the Greeks of old, to despise the unphilosophical religion of the men who turned, and even yet turn, the world upside down with a message of God as Personality, Father, Love, and Grace. But the future theology of the Christian faith must proceed along different lines from that of the past ; it must be inclusive and positive in method, taking the concrete experience of man as its surest basis, and raising to an infinite power the positive moral qualities it finds there, as the way to the truest definition of God possible to man ; proclaiming the kinship of divine and human, and finding in God the source of all that is of positive value, physical, or intellectual, or ethical, in human life. What we value, that we shall derive from God as its source ; above all, we shall trace to the substance of the Eternal the moral character of Jesus Christ, as the highest and noblest expression of the Unseen which we have had ; and our God shall be thought of in terms, however enhanced, of human affections and moral qualities, which must surely bear the same relations of importance and direction to the physical aspects of God as do our souls to our bodies. Indeed, it is a definition of the soul rather than the body of God, if I may

Extraneous Influences

so phrase it, that this world needs as the message of religion.

IX

I have spoken of the devitalising power of philosophical abstraction and of argument *in vacuo*. The philosophical theologian is still too much the arm-chair critic, while the minister of the Gospel is called to the healing of men's souls. If only our philosophers spent half their working day in the rescue of human life and character, in the binding up of breaking hearts, and the knitting together of human homes into which discord has entered, and spent the rest of it in explaining, and giving foundation to, life and action as thus viewed in the concrete, their philosophy would soon wear more of the garments of positive religion, and fewer of those of a critical suspension of judgment, which makes of unbelief a luxury denied to more practical minds. We must live, we must act, speak and think in the concrete, or we shall soon have a belief which will bring nothing but dispeace to ourselves—though it may bear the appearance of heroic conflict for truth—and which does, and can do, nothing for other lives. Peace of mind, though not our objective, is at least a test of the best life, the life of harmony within; and toward that peace abstract thinking, like introspection, can give little help.

Philosophy in every age is a brake upon or corrective of unsound thinking, and needed as such, but those who regard it as a royal road to the truth will be disillusioned ere long, not only

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

by the failures of philosophers to agree with one another, or even of the individual philosopher to agree with himself by consistency as between belief and conduct, but also by its practical failure to help, comfort, strengthen, or instruct man where he most needs these ministrations. Nevertheless philosophy is from the same God who has given us religion, and it has a clearly defined rôle to play in the development of man and his knowledge, above all in training his mind, and in testing, and keeping true to the plummet, the sense of truth and of its eternal obligation.

x

In conclusion, I would remind you once more that in all religions, as in all activities of the human spirit, there exist both elements of good and elements of evil ; and that the good is sometimes peculiar in its content to a particular environment, and so must belong to, and stand for, ultimate truth in some measure. We need universal assimilation in a religion which is potentially universal, if it is to become actually so ; we need to add to our Christian system a point here and a point there, that we may include within it all God's truth. Prejudice must not be allowed to hamper or limit our apprehension of that truth which God has sent forth into the world at sundry times and in divers manners. All our seeking after God comes finally from Himself, as does also all our finding of Him ; for all things good are of Him, who giveth to all

Extraneous Influences

life and breath and all things, and who "hath made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

All religion, then, is the search for God prompted by Himself; and in all the religions of men there are gleams of that light that lighteth every man, which will surely need appropriation by us, if our lamp is to burn with its full light. It was so in apostolic days, as modern scholarship has shown so clearly, and it is so to-day, and for ever. All good and worthy forms, therefore, should by the Church be assimilated, so far as, and where, it is possible; and all evil and unworthy should be refused, even if we have learned to know and use them within the Christian circle of things. Discrimination is here what we need, a discrimination, under the guidance of God's Spirit and wisdom, both of our own traditional Christian forms, and of the non-Christian forms which we meet continually, that we may refuse the evil and choose the good, and finally take up into our faith all that is of the true Kingdom of God, and of positive value, throughout the wide world. For all good is from the One who is All-Good, and who is the promise and the bond of a universal knowledge of Himself, which shall be the perfect religion and the final theology of man.

Conclusion

Let me very briefly conclude this series of lectures. I am conscious that the work done has many defects, both in substance and form, and that it is very uneven in execution. Owing to circumstances, it had to be completed more hastily than I had originally intended ; but I shall be content if, with all its demerits, it has helped to a fuller appreciation of religious truth and religious activities, or to a better understanding of our own faith and a more sympathetic attitude towards the beliefs and practices of others who are not of the same fold. I shall be more than rewarded if, in these ways, it encourages some to a new attempt after that larger unity of Christian effort which is so much desired to-day, and of which the foundation must be laid in clear, sincere and sympathetic thinking. I have not in these studies been much interested in Protestant polemic, but more in the appreciation of the universal Christian experience which knows no ultimate boundary but the one God.

I have proposed various theses, and attempted to substantiate and illustrate them from history, and, I hope, not without some success. There are many matters which I have been quite unable to touch upon within the limits prescribed by time ; but I have sought throughout to show as clearly as I could the ultimate connection between

The Changing Vesture of the Faith

forms and experience, a truth which is as yet very partially apprehended. All our life is blended of good and evil, and all our forms have the same blend ; none exists independently of experience (though experience has very different levels of spiritual value), and none fully expresses the great facts of Christianity. The person of Christ, the reconciliation of God and man in Him, the conceptions of sin, of pardon, of love, of grace, of personality—all these things elude our forms and our definitions in large part ; and we recognise how feeble and narrow a thing theology is, compared with religious experience, and how shadowy and unreal the forms of Christian worship and service are, compared with the vision which has been granted to us.

But life and forms, with all the limitations which actual conditions involve, go hand in hand along the road of progress towards our ideal in God ; and neither of the two may safely be overlooked. Life must always, for a healthy Christianity, dominate forms, but it cannot dispense with them ; and it must seek to create or recreate them continually after the pattern shown to it in the Mount. The failure of forms, however, is not the condemnation of the Church, but a witness to our human limitations ; while the failure of life is the ultimate condemnation of either Church or character, *i.e.*, of either corporate or individual life. Let us, then, realise both the need and the danger of forms with open eyes, and the supreme value of life in relation to them ; and, with this knowledge, let us seek, as God may

Conclusion

give us wisdom and opportunity, to express sincerely and freely our own Christian life and experience, and to allow to others that which we claim for ourselves.

I have to thank you for your patience and attention in following me through the lengthened course of these our studies in Christian things, and I would close with the wish that the Spirit of truth may abide with you each and all in ever increasing measure, that He may guide you into all the truth, and that He may take of the things of Jesus and declare them unto you.

And now unto Him that is able to guard us from stumbling, and to set us before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God and Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore.

AMEN.

